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**GOLDEN TEXTS**  
FOR 1910



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# DREW SERMONS

ON THE

# GOLDEN TEXTS

## FOR 1910

EDITED BY

EZRA SQUIER TIPPLE, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF PRACTICAL THEOLOGY  
DREW THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



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## LESSON FOR JANUARY 2

### JOHN THE FORERUNNER OF JESUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness,  
Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."—  
Matt. 3. 3.

BY GEORGE P. ECKMAN, D.D.

PASTOR SAINT PAUL'S METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,  
NEW YORK CITY

In the recently published biography of Sir Redvers Buller it is authoritatively stated that he was officially urged to succeed the Duke of Cambridge as commander-in-chief of the British army, but declined on the ground that he believed Lord Wolseley was a better man for the place. Though frequently besought to alter his decision, he steadfastly maintained his refusal of the exalted position, until a change in the government brought the honor and responsibility to another, enabling Queen Victoria to tell him that, "though he had declined to be a commander-in-chief, he had made one." It is the distinction of John the Baptist that he refused to be elevated to the high place which his generation seemed ready to assign him, and focused the gaze of the world on Jesus.

This inflexible loyalty to the limited function of heralding another is the outstanding characteristic of John, and it rendered him truly great, as the consistent pointing of men to Christ inevitably heightens the dignity of any man. It concentrated his powers on a task large enough to draw out his finest qualities. It linked him forever with the mission of Jesus. It placed him at the point of transition from the old to the new dispensation. His figure marks the inauguration of the Christian movement, which is ultimately to conquer the world. Jesus signalized the magnitude of this

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**office, and the nobility of the man who filled it, when he said, "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist."**

There is an old Jewish legend which declares that, when the children of Israel were passing through the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and fire leveled the hills and filled the valleys in preparation for their advance. It is a fact of common knowledge that the progress of large armies through a difficult territory is made possible only by a process of temporary road-making which removes inequalities and provides a fairly even course for transporting great bodies of men and the ponderous engines of warfare. In the East, where good highways are infrequent, this is particularly necessary, and was doubly so in ancient times. The prophetic figure which John adopted from the predictions of Isaiah needed no explanation to his generation. It would vividly impress them with the importance of providing an appropriate reception for the divine deliverer. They were not prepared, however, for the kind of demand which John made upon them. Their conception of the kingdom of God was too carnal for the spiritual ideals which the forerunner of the Messiah came to express, and hence the necessity for the sharp and pungent ethical preaching of John, a requirement which exists in our own generation for the same reason. It is natural to ask, if we have no clear understanding of the character of the kingdom, why any preparation is necessary for the way of the Lord. He surely does not confine himself to the avenues which men construct. He can stride from mountain top to ocean headland, traverse seas and deserts, pierce every wilderness and trample all obstacles beneath his feet. What preparations that puny mortals can make are indispensable to the progress of the Omnipotent?

The question springs from a misconception of the kingdom, and a failure to realize the process by which it makes its conquests. It is always difficult for the

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unspiritual man to comprehend the operations of the spiritual realm. He looks for a kingdom modeled on the sovereignties of earth, whose constitutions have been written in the blood of their subjects and slaves, and whose thrones have been erected on the ruins of defeated empires. He thinks of armies and navies, courts and palaces, the imposing machinery of human governments. Finding that these external marks of power are alien to the very genius of the kingdom of God, he discredits it as a merely sentimental conception of pious romancers. Yet nothing is more actual than this kingdom. It "is not in word, but in power." It is not a kingdom of dreams, like the lost Atlantis, which tradition declares existed ten thousand years ago, and was suddenly swallowed up by the angry sea, leaving no trace behind. It is not a kingdom of pleasing fancies, like Sir Thomas More's Utopia, or Plato's Republic, which have charmed the minds of social and political idealists. It is not a kingdom of unrealized ambitions, like that of Charles Edward, the pretender, who insisted upon calling himself the king of England when he had only a few paltry regiments of partisans to help him hold his empty title. It is not a kingdom of pretense, but of power; not of arrogance, but of authority; not of fancy, but of fact. Nevertheless, it is a kingdom devoid of coast defenses and fortified cities. It knows neither courts nor parliaments. It has no treasury vaults piled with golden hoards. Crown jewels and imperial baubles make no figure among its symbols of power and authority. It "cometh not with outward show." It is a spiritual kingdom. It "is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." It is that kingdom which, though invisible, finds expression in the holy lives and triumphant labors of its free citizens, which diffuses itself through all societies and civilizations as rapidly as they are willing to accept its spiritual ideals, which is to extend itself over the entire earth, and is to be con-

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summated in the universal sovereignty of the "King eternal, immortal, invisible" in the world to come. Such a kingdom gains its conquests only by penetrating the hardest hearts with the power of the truth. It wins its provinces not by compulsion of arms, but by convincing the moral sense of mankind, by inducing penitence and faith in the souls of the sinning, by invoking the love of the human spirit for freedom and righteousness. This is the kingdom which John announced, and preparation for which he enjoined upon the crowds which flocked to his ministry.

"The way of the Lord" is the way of holiness; and to prepare it demands the putting aside of every evil way. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," points the precise method of accomplishing this result. There is nothing mysterious about this demand. It is in perfect harmony with the constitution of things. The kingdom of knowledge is always at hand, but he who would have it must repent of his ignorance, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The kingdom of beauty is always at hand, but whosoever will have it must turn from ugliness and discord, and set himself toward the things which are lovely. The kingdom of heaven is always at hand, but only those perceive and obtain it who are ready to shape their lives in accordance with its principles. The question is one of spiritual attitude.

The message of John was delivered to the entire world. Whether consciously or otherwise, he was actually flinging his challenge to universal society. He was heralding no tribal Messiah, but the King of all worlds. He was summoning civilization to the scepter of the supreme authority. The kingdom of heaven is always at hand, and forever persistent is the demand for preparation that its triumphant advance may be instantly made. Whenever society in any part of the earth repents of sins committed against the welfare of humanity; whenever mountains of arrogance are

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leveled, the depressions occasioned by despotism are filled, the tortuous courses of policy are abandoned for the straight and narrow way of righteousness, the rough inequalities of social tyranny are smoothed into the even path of humane progress, the world witnesses an attempt to prepare the way of the Lord. The abolition of human slavery, the relief of poverty and suffering, the cure of crime and legalized vice, the increase of fraternity among the mighty and the lowly, are all so many indications that society is bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. Before the portals of all the nations the bugle-blast of John is sounding; and whenever an ethical revival occurs, such as has recently swept over America, in which public and private sins have been made loathsome in the sight of men, it is a token that the kingdom is advancing and the King is receiving tribute. The churches are hearing the self-same call of the herald; and they are abandoning their foolish quibbles over nonessential dogmas and ecclesiastical pedigrees, and confederating their forces for a united attack upon the iniquities of the world. This too signalizes the coming of the King to victory. But all these results are being secured through the steady conquest of individual lives. One by one souls are annexed to the territory of the kingdom, and so the process must continue until families, communities, nations, continents—the world shall have been swept into the embrace of that divine commonwealth which John the Baptist proclaimed.

But the indispensable prerequisite for the reception of the kingdom is the acknowledgment that it is needed in human life. John's first stroke was aimed at self-satisfaction. Coleridge told of a man who never mentioned himself without taking off his hat. John would have us understand that we should never think of ourselves without shame on account of our ill desert. His challenge was, "You are wrong; get right." Louis XIV said to Massillon, "When I hear other great preachers

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I am satisfied with them; but when I hear you I am dissatisfied with myself." Epictetus said, "If you wish to be good, first believe that you are bad." In an analogous fashion it may be said that culture is impossible to him who does not admit his boorishness. As there is no education which is not preceded by the confession of ignorance, so there is no godliness without the acknowledgment of unrighteousness.

This is one of the most needed lessons of the hour. Many have professed to hail the kingdom of heaven with joy. But they are like the Pharisees and Sadducees who plumed themselves on belonging to the religious aristocracy. They call themselves the children of Abraham, and claim the kingdom as their inalienable right. "By our citizenship in a Christian commonwealth, by our membership in a Christian congregation, by our espousal of a Christian creed," they say, "we are entitled to the privileges and immunities of the kingdom of heaven." To them must be given anew the sharp word of John the Baptist, who describes the coming Messiah as a husbandman at his threshing, "whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Nothing short of the soul's abandonment of sin gives any promise of the kingdom.

As the kingdom of the air and the kingdom of the light are always at hand, and only require that the barriers which impede them shall be removed in order that they may flow into our lives to bless them, so the kingdom of heaven is always at hand, and only requires that the sins which oppose its progress shall be put aside in order that it may move in upon our spirits to possess and sanctify them. The historical order is also the sequence in the soul's experience: repentance precedes salvation. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord."

## LESSON FOR JANUARY 9

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### THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."—Heb. 2. 18.

BY WILLIAM H. MITCHELL, JR.

ASSISTANT PASTOR METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH,  
STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT

HISTORICALLY there is no need of my telling the facts of the baptism and temptation of Jesus Christ. These facts are familiar to every Sunday school scholar; and who, at some time in his life, has not been a Sunday school scholar? It is not my intention, therefore, to relate the facts, but to go at once to the lesson to be derived from them.

#### I. THE BAPTISM WAS THE POINT WHERE THE MESSIAH BEGAN MEETING MEN

1. *Was it Necessary?* Baptism is a rite signifying the confession of sin, the need and desire of cleansing, and the purpose to turn from sin unto a new life. The perfection of Christ is one of the most significant teachings of the Scriptures. The prophets imply it, the Gospels proclaim it, and Saint Paul refers to it again and again. To meet the necessities of the world in redeeming it from sin he must be without sin. To keep the relation as set forth in the Trinity, "of one substance," he must be without sin. If, then, Christ was sinless and pure, how could he accept or what was the need of accepting this purifying rite, or what was gained by doing so? Owing to his sinless character there was no *need* of his being baptized. In and of itself baptism added nothing to nor detracted anything from the Christ, and he could accept it because of the results gained. The gain is to us, in that it shows Jesus get-

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ting down to where men are. He was going through the same experiences as men go through, and because of this, this Golden Text is a reality. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He was dwelling among men, he was going through the same experiences. It was at this time, the beginning of his effective ministry, and when he was getting down to where men are, that the Father gave his approval. "Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased," were no idle words, but were intended to show that God approved of his getting down elbow to elbow with men.

Again, "It is the point where they are turning from sin. John's baptism meant turning from sin. It is at that point that Jesus comes forward. A man can always be live-sure of Jesus meeting him there, close up, with outstretched hand."<sup>1</sup>

2. *It was the Beginning.* Heretofore Jesus has dwelt in comparative seclusion. Only a limited number were conscious of his exceptional character, and these not wholly so. This is the beginning of his public life, and the beginning of that time when we see the disclosing of that unique character, the human becoming divine and the divine becoming human.

### II. THE REALITY OF THE EXPERIENCE

1. *How it Became Known.* Has it ever occurred to you how these personal experiences of the Christ became known? These temptations came to him in the solitude of the wilderness, on the pinnacle of the temple, or on the mountain top. There were no friends or other enemies there, no stenographer to take verbatim this volley of words between the tempter and the tempted, and yet we have it in its fullness for our strengthening and help. How, then, did it become known, or why? Could it not be that in some of the hours spent in Nazareth in his love for his mother Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> S. D. Gordon.

## THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

in the later part of his life told Mary, and she told Luke, and Luke the others? Yet it seems far more probable and effective that Jesus told them to the world in the course of his preaching. These were personal experiences, and at a time when he desired to encourage some one who was passing through the strange experience of temptation he spoke from the fullness of his heart. The temptation was a real experience to him, he had passed through the fire, he had "kept the faith," and when he saw some soul in its struggle with the same evil power what could be more helpful than a word of personal experience and the assurance of victory? In any case, they must have been first related by Jesus Christ, and to doubt these temptations is to doubt the Christ himself.

2. *The Strength of the Temptation.* With man Satan chooses for his attack the point where he will most probably succeed. In the final temptation of Christ his manner of procedure was not otherwise. At the baptism he became subservient to the will of the Father. He was led into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. For forty days the temptation lasted and culminated in the three temptations narrated in the Gospels. "The one essence of these experiences is resolved into the question of absolute submission to the will of God, which is the sum and substance of all obedience."<sup>1</sup> The test of turning stones into bread was, would he submit to the will of God in enduring the conditions that God saw fit to make for him? The second was a question of, would he take into his own hands the way of manifesting his coming to the people, coming suddenly from the temple heights, or would he submit to the slower, less spectacular way of God? The third seems to me to be the important test, and is as much a surrender on the part of Satan as a temptation on the part of Christ. All the conditions would be met

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Edersheim.

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by supposing the scene to take place upon some mountain in the district of Jerusalem. And where else but in Palestine could such a scene be found? Far to the north the mountains of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon, culminating in snow-capped Hermon; eastward the valley of the Jordan, its slopes covered with terraces and gardens and vineyards; beyond the Jordan the fertile plains and the desert extending toward the Euphrates; southward was the Negeb, with its populous cities, its pasture lands and flocks and herdsmen; to the east the Philistine plain, the land of the Gentiles, and the great expanse of sea dotted with sails bearing the commerce of the world. In connection with this scene of nature he would realize the ornativeness and art of the cities, the organization of the state under Herod, the beauty and sparkle of wealth, the tramp of armed forces, and the hum of voices. Here, indeed, were displayed before him "the kingdoms of the world." Satan virtually says to him, "All these are mine, else why did you come?" He also concedes that time "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Christ." Then he says, "All these will I give" (surrender), and the time *now*. Would the Christ accept the terms of Satan and the immediate consummation of his work, or would he be obedient to the will of God and take the circuitous route of the cross and the thousands of years before the final conquest of Satan?

### III. "HE IS ABLE TO SUCCOR THEM THAT ARE TEMPTED"

1. "*He himself hath suffered being tempted.*" Herein we have the greatest inspiration of the Christ. Jesus Christ is precious to me because of his perfection; the great deeds of his life strengthen me; his cruel death merits all my sympathy and love; his resurrection gives me hope; his ascension is positive. Yet death is an experience at the end of this life, and the resurrection and ascension experiences after death.

## THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Our system of theology teaches us that the condition after death depends on the character of life on this side of the grave. Thus it comes to me that the everyday life, the everyday experience, is the most vital and real thing I have. Temptation is an everyday experience. What man is there who does not have to meet the tempter every day? "He himself hath suffered being tempted." Therefore Jesus Christ is most helpful to me when he helps me in the everyday life. He has had the same experiences that you pass through every day and is "yet without sin," and therein is the significance. What he did in this matter through his help I can do. I know a man who was once a foreman of a crew of mechanics. He never asked these men to do anything he had not done or could not do. He wanted them to be efficient workmen, and instead of driving them or offering them higher wages he taught them by example. If there was a difficult part to do or a dangerous place to go he went first and showed them the possibility. They learned to trust him and to love him, and in a comparatively short time they were able to do what he did. Jesus Christ came on a mission to show us the way of eternal life. The way of eternal life was to master sin and temptation. The Master was tempted like as we are, yet was without sin. He does not ask us to do anything he has not done. "But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." By his going before, by giving us an example, he accomplishes this.

2. *The Value of Personal Experience.* Personal experience is not something that can be gained by reading, or by hearing another relate it. It is the actually having it come to one. It is not a thought or dreamed experience, it is a feeling experience, and this kind is the most valuable. At a certain point on the New England coast a light can be seen burning brightly each

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night. However dark or stormy, or clear and crystal, that light is there. The sailors have learned to know it, to depend upon it, and to steer by it when entering that harbor. It is kept by a woman who has reversed the natural order of sleep and work. The day is spent in sleep and rest, but at night the lamp is lighted and placed in the window, and with knitting in hand seated by that lamp she keeps her vigil. When a girl nine years of age her father was lost one night while trying to make that harbor. She has lost her earthly father, she has suffered the sorrow of orphanage, and now to help some one else, to save some sailor, to save some other boy or girl from a similar fate she does this work. It is not a government light, but one kept voluntarily, a testimony of one's experience and a willingness to do something to help another who is in need.

3. *Various Ways of Helping.* It is true that there are various ways of aiding men in these everyday experiences. There might be the entire elimination of sin, and consequently of temptation, but in this wilderness experience Jesus has chosen "the more excellent way." The temptation was real. For forty days it continued, the climax being reached when the tempter assailed him in regard to his submissiveness to God's will. Here Jesus has shown us the way of resisting Satan.

Two men may be working side by side and each be resisting or yielding to temptation and the other not know it. The world is scarcely able to see or realize the temptation or trial of the other man. The real struggle is being waged behind the closed doors of the soul, where no help of this world can be summoned, where man cannot enter, where friend cannot go, but there Jesus can come, and he says to the tempted one, "Lo, I have walked the same path. I have overcome. Follow me."

## LESSON FOR JANUARY 16

### THE BEGINNING OF THE GALILEAN MINISTRY

GOLDEN TEXT: "The people which sat in darkness saw great light."—Matt. 4. 16.

BY JOHN J. WALLACE, D.D.

EDITOR PITTSBURG CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE, PITTSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

1. *The ministry of Jesus Christ in word and deed was the fulfillment of prophecy.* Sometimes in a literal and often in a striking way what he said or did corresponded to a prophetic utterance. This manner of accomplishing the things which were written of him appealed strongly to the men of that day. They entertained no doubt concerning the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. They believed that the words of the prophets were good for all time. They were in expectation that the predictions of the holy men who had spoken from God were about to be fulfilled. The literal correspondence, therefore, between the sure words of prophecy and the facts in the history of Jesus impressed them. They believed in the oracles of the prophets, not because they were fulfilled in him but because they had been received from the fathers. They were encouraged and impelled to believe in him because his deeds and words answered to the statements of inspired men who had made these predictions concerning him long before.

Saint Matthew's citations of the scriptures which, in this literal way, were fulfilled in Jesus Christ can be fully appreciated only from the point of view of the age in which the Gospels were written. When we consider that the literature of the prophets was regarded by the Jews in Christ's time as a body of predictions waiting to be fulfilled, we can understand how these literal correspondences would impress the men of that

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day. It was not that Saint Matthew, or Saint Paul, was consciously using the *argumentum ad hominem*; for the apostles were impressed in the same way, they occupied the standpoint of their readers. Moreover, the literal fulfillment of the utterances of the prophets is impressive even yet to those who regard prophecy as mainly inspired prediction. But in this day the subject is often, if not commonly, approached from another point of view. On the one hand, we know Christ. After nineteen centuries of ever-increasing spiritual conquest we know him indeed as the spiritual Master of men. His position is too secure to be materially affected one way or the other by the correspondence or lack of correspondence between the circumstances and acts of his life and the words of ancient Hebrew writings. On the other hand, we know the prophets as preachers of righteousness, fearless men of God sent to warn or comfort or inspire the people of their own day; and we know their writings as messages addressed and adapted to the circumstances and the men of that day. Even the passages which are quoted by the evangelists and applied to Christ are clearly seen to have had a more immediate application to the age in which they were first spoken. That somewhat crude view of prophecy which regarded the utterances of the prophets as mainly inspired predictions set down in one age to be fulfilled in another age, near or remote, that the men of the latter time might see the correspondence between event and prediction, and believe, is no longer tenable. The prophets were fully identified with the life of their own age and country. They were heroic and patriotic servants of their time and people. Nevertheless, they were the servants of all times and all peoples because they were the servants of the God of the whole earth and of all the ages. The prophets did "dip into the future" farther "than human eye could see." They anticipated things which were to come to pass. They admonished and encour-

## BEGINNING OF GALILEAN MINISTRY

aged the kings and people of the times in which they lived with visions of the times to come, visions of judgment and restoration and of marvelous transformations. Moreover, the writings of the prophets have a remarkable unity though composed in periods remote and vastly different from each other. They have a common subject and aim. The one great subject with which they deal is the kingdom of God, and their common aim is to promote the reign of righteousness. The God in whom the prophets believed and whom they preached was the one living, holy, and righteous God who, because of his ethical character, must reign over his people and over all the earth. Now, his rule over Israel began with their redemption from Egypt. But it was plain to the prophets that Israel needed a deeper and fuller redemption—a spiritual salvation—and it was this the prophets looked for, following the judgments which they foresaw impending over Israel and the nations. Disgusted with the kings of their own day, they anticipated the glorious time when a real king would reign in righteousness. Knowing the impotence of the law to make men alive and just, they looked for the coming of a day when a new law would be written upon the minds and hearts of the people. Realizing how futile the rites and sacrifices, the blood of bulls and goats, were to take away sins, they foretold atonement through the suffering servant of the Lord. Seeing that their own words, though they spoke from God, were disregarded, they began to look and long for the realization of Immanuel, the day when God himself would visit and redeem his people.

The aim of Jesus Christ was identical with the aim of the prophets. His teaching was concerning the kingdom of God; it was the new law of love which can be written within. All the deeper longings and ardent expectations of the prophets, voicing the deepest aspirations of the souls of men, were fulfilled in him. The more fully the prophets are identified with human

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history, the more wonderful appears Christ's fulfillment of prophecy, and the more plainly do we see that the miracle of prophecy is more than the miracle of an isolated prediction fulfilled in a special event. The burden of prophecy was this: God had a great and everlasting good to bestow upon men, and this good was associated with the coming of the divine kingdom and of a divine Person. When Jesus Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom and lived his life of love and service on earth, his ministry was the fulfillment of prophecy in the largest and truest way.

*2. The preaching of Jesus Christ was the announcement of a kingdom which is not of this world.* He began to say, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Whether Jesus used the phrase, "kingdom of God," or the other phrase, "kingdom of heaven," uniformly, or whether, as is most likely, he used both phrases interchangeably, there is no question but that he was speaking of the supreme good which God bestows upon men. The kingdom is from God and is heavenly in its character as it is eternal in its duration. Whatever this pregnant phrase may mean—and we are, perhaps, far from having fathomed the depth or explored the breadth of its meaning as Jesus used it—it is increasingly plain that the kingdom of heaven is not an evolution from beneath but a revelation from above; increasingly plain as we learn more about the kingdom and more about nature and human history. We have been rapidly learning the secrets of nature in the past century, and we are reasonably sure that there has been an evolution and that the natural order of the world is the product of a process of development, some of the laws of which we have discovered. We believe that God has been in this evolution and that his power and wisdom constitute the secret of it. God has done and is doing much for men in and through the natural order. But the kingdom of heaven is not the product of that order, it is rather an invasion of it. God has

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done and is doing something for men and through men which he does not do in nature. The coming of Christ was an invasion of the natural order, and God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

So, also, the kingdom of heaven is an interference with the affairs of men. They cannot go on "getting and spending" and "laying waste their powers" and at the same time participate in the kingdom of God, the supreme good, or successfully prosecute the search for his kingdom and righteousness. They cannot serve God and mammon. The preaching of the kingdom is a call to repentance, to a change of mind and purpose. The business, the politics, the social life of men ought to be interfered with, and the coming of God's kingdom in grace and judgment is just that interference which is needed. Christ did not come to send peace upon the earth, but a sword. He *gives* peace to those who suffer, nay, rather, who welcome his interposition. But he was hated by the men of his own day, even unto death, because his coming and kingdom was an interference with their manner of life.

But while the kingdom which Christ announced is an invasion, it is not a subversion of the natural order. While the preaching of the gospel is an interference with the affairs of men, it is not inimical to their welfare. Spiritual freedom and life in Christ are the fulfillment of the natural and social order. The freedom and the life which is life indeed are found in the kingdom which Jesus announced in his first preaching, set forth in his subsequent teaching, and established through his life, death, and resurrection.

3. *The gospel is for those who sit in darkness.* It was a significant fact that Jesus should exercise his ministry not in Jerusalem, where the worship of Jehovah was celebrated and where the Scriptures were exalted, but in Galilee of the nations, where the population was mixed and the people were regarded by the orthodox party as accursed because they knew not the law.

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It was a remarkable fact, too, that Isaiah should foresee that just here, where in the natural and human order of things it was least to be expected, a great light should appear. The Spirit of Christ was in the prophet. That the gospel of the kingdom was preached first not to those who sat in the seats of privilege and were accounted most worthy, but to those who sat in spiritual darkness and were accounted least worthy, is another evidence that the kingdom is not an evolution but an invasion. So, too, is the fact that the unworthy are most available as material for citizenship in the kingdom, even as Jesus said to the representatives of high privilege in his day, "The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

The gospel is a great light because it penetrates the deepest darkness and transforms the most hopeless character. It is a great light because it shows the light of self-achievement in righteousness and of self-exaltation because of privilege, the light which is in us, to be darkness, and convicts of sin those who are accounted most worthy. It is a great light because it reveals to us in the Father of Jesus Christ a God who has proved himself worthy to be worshiped and obeyed inasmuch as he gives unstintedly both love and freedom. It is a great light because in following Christ we have something to do which is worth while, even the creation of a brotherhood in which we may have fellowship forever. For the light of the gospel penetrates the region and shadow of death, illuminates the one and drives the other away. It sets life and immortality in the light.

How sweetly flowed the gospel's sound  
From lips of gentleness and grace,  
While listening thousands gathered round,  
And joy and gladness filled the place!

From heaven He came, of heaven he spoke,  
To heaven he led his followers' way;  
Dark clouds of gloomy night he broke,  
Unveiling an immortal day.

## LESSON FOR JANUARY 23

### TRUE BLESSEDNESS

GOLDEN TEXT: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."—Matt. 5. 8.

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THE word "blessed" belongs to a large group of words to which usage in the New Testament and in Christian phraseology has given a larger and a higher meaning. The older Greek notion of superlative happiness related itself to outward prosperity, including the possession of wealth and the resulting means and leisure for self-indulgence. The gods were blessed because of their superior knowledge and power, and their consequent emancipation from the restraints to which man is subject. With the Greek philosophers, from Socrates onward, by whom virtue and knowledge were identified, a moral element came into the word, the essence of blessedness being conceived of as inward correctness of life, resulting from adequate knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical use of the word "blessed" lifted it into the realm of the spiritual, making it include the sense of God's approval of righteousness, although in the Old Testament the idea still involved more of outward prosperity than in the New Testament. In the New Testament, finally, the word passes into the region of higher Christian thought, and is given the rich significance of spiritual blessedness resulting from love and fellowship with Christ in life and service.

The Greeks, again, applied the adjective "blessed" only to the gods and to heroes who, because they had

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<sup>1</sup>Comp. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament.

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died in battle, were deified. Only by gods and demi-gods was blessedness thought to be attainable. This earlier restriction in the use of the term is reflected in several New Testament passages, as, for example, where the apostle Paul in his letter to Timothy speaks of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1. 11); and again when he refers to Christ as "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6. 15).

### WHO ARE BLESSED, AND WHY?

It was, therefore, next to an innovation for Jesus to apply this adjective of superlative happiness to mortals as he did in the opening sentences of the Sermon on the Mount. The astonishment of his hearers must have been great indeed, for not only did he apply the term to mortals, but to mortals some of whom at least, according to the conceptions and standards of the time, were considered to be quite the opposite of superlatively happy. Among the ancients poverty meant only misery; meekness and mercy were not virtues, while peacemakers and those who humbly sought after righteousness and purity of life were, with the reviled and the persecuted, put into one and the same category of the miserable.

But why did Jesus call these blessed, rather than the rich, the powerful, the high and mighty? Perhaps it was because he estimated values by the standards of an eternal spiritual kingdom, and not by those of men; because he spoke in the language of that kingdom in which petty distinctions of wealth and power have no place, but where mercy supplements justice, where faith, hope, and love are enthroned, and where self-sacrifice and loving service is a law of life; because the blessedness he had in mind was to extend beyond the narrow limits of time and space out into the eternities. In our text Jesus pronounces blessed those who are pure in heart, adding the promise that such shall see

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God. Let us therefore inquire: Wherein does purity of heart consist? and further, What does it mean to see God?

### WHEREIN DOES PURITY OF HEART CONSIST?

Heart Purity. These two words represents two familiar concepts. The word "heart" in its literal and primary sense refers to the physical organ which regulates the circulation of the blood. In its figurative or common literary usage it signifies the seat of the affections, the passions, and the emotions of man; or, again, it is used to designate the entire personality, including intellect and will, considered as capable of being moved. This usage is frequent in both the Old and the New Testament. We are told that when Joseph's brethren discovered the king's cup among their possessions "their heart failed them." They were disturbed and troubled in mind, not knowing which way to turn, or what step to take next. When "Pharaoh hardened his heart" and would not let the children of Israel go, he set himself with a fixed purpose against the severe chastisement of Jehovah and the cries of a subject race. When the psalmist prays, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Jehovah," he asks that his innermost thoughts and aspirations as well as his outward life may be pleasing to God. And when God through his prophet speaks the invitation, "Give me, my son, thy heart," it is no partial surrender of self and no partial service that he desires, but the whole man. It is in this figurative sense, referring to the inner soul life which is the vital and controlling center of thought and action, that the word "heart" must be understood in our text.

But this fountain and wellspring of motive and volition may become contaminated. The environment of office, workshop, and street is frequently not conducive to high and noble thinking. The daily press and

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popular literature of our time too often exploit the sordid and sensational. Through eye and ear suggestions enter the mind and heart which mar and soil and leave a stain. Inherited weaknesses and tendencies toward sin impede our progress forward and upward toward the goal of Christian perfection. As in the days of Jeremiah, the human heart is still by nature "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." Out of it still come forth "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railing," and "these are the things which defile the man." Contrasted with this picture of defilement and sinfulness the ideal of heart purity set forth in the New Testament seems all but impossible of attainment.

Purity, like goodness, is a relative term. Water may appear to us clear as crystal, but the microscope reveals myriads of tiny particles and living organisms not visible to the naked eye, while beyond the reach even of the magnifying lens may be a most deadly poison held in perfect solution. A pure heart presupposes a separation from all those grosser forms of iniquity and vice which every right-thinking person abhors. On this point there can be no argument. But how much more does the ideal demand? What are the subtler forms of sin which must be overcome and eliminated before a life measures up to the ideal? What of pride and vanity, an unforgiving spirit, jealousy, an uncontrolled temper? What of all the category of those things which Paul reminds the Corinthians that love doeth not? What of half-heartedness and self-seeking in Christian service?

All these may, perhaps, be eradicated from the heart by persistent, prayerful endeavor, but it is the common experience of those who have walked longest and most humbly in the way of life that knowledge increases with virtue and that ideals advance with increasing knowledge. Two things at least are plain: 1. The New Testament ideal of a sanctified, holy life, the ideal of

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perfect Christian character, is higher and more difficult of attainment than some have supposed. Like heaven, it cannot be reached at a single bound, even though the consecration of one's life at any given moment may be complete. It cannot be otherwise than that the conception which any given individual follower of the Lord Jesus may have of that state or experience which the several New Testament writers and Jesus himself have described in different terms should fall short of the total composite ideal. That, like the character of Jesus, must ever remain greater and higher than we can conceive. 2. So far as the individual, therefore, is concerned, the ideal of heart purity is one that constantly unfolds and advances with experience and with growth in knowledge and in grace.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SEE GOD?

Our final inquiry concerns itself with the promise attached to the beatitude of our text. This is a promise of an exceedingly great reward. But God does not bestow rewards, as he does not inflict punishments, arbitrarily. In the out-working of unchangeable laws these alike follow as the natural and unavoidable consequences of life and character. The "set of mind," the controlling motive, the *Weltanschauung* of a man determine what he sees, what he strives for, how he interprets the world in which he lives. What is already in the mind determines what else shall gain admission. Wicked men cannot see God because they are preoccupied with other visions.

To the man of impure thoughts and impure life others also seem impure. From his prison cell the slave to selfish ambitions and passions looks out upon the world through darkened windows. He who through life seeks the gratification of selfish desires pursues but a desert mirage, and the more hasty the pursuit the more disappointing the result at each successive stage of the journey. Instead of an oasis with its cooling

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shade and bubbling spring, there is ever and again only the desert waste of a satiated but unsatisfied existence.

But let us reverently and humbly seek to draw the other, brighter picture. To see God has for the pure in heart a present and a future meaning. Here and now it means to apprehend God, to recognize his presence and to understand the language in which he speaks to men. Thus men see God in nature, for the heavens declare his glory. Thus men trace his footsteps in the pathway of human history and discern that the turbid, surging stream of intermingling races is borne along upon a deeper, stronger undercurrent of intelligent design and of superhuman purpose. Thus men see God in personal experience—in a shielded childhood, a wholesome environment in youth, opportunity and success in later years, in the nurture and development of their spiritual life. Thus they discover the true, the beautiful, and the good in others. Thus do they see God in his written Word. Thus men meet with him in his sanctuary and in the secret place of prayer. And "when this mortal shall have put on immortality," then it shall come to pass that the visions of this present life shall be lost sight of in the transfiguration glory of eternity.

Brethren, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when it<sup>1</sup> shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. Ver. margin.

## LESSON FOR JANUARY 30

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### SOME LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

GOLDEN TEXT: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—Matt. 5. 48.

#### THE RELIGION OF PERFECT LOVE

By ISMAR J. PERITZ, PH.D.

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THE Revised Version reads: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The Master's words of this Golden Text embody God's ideal for man, and that is nothing less than that he should become perfect as his Maker. But the immediate context leaves it beyond doubt that the perfection of which the Master speaks is not that of wisdom or power, but it is the perfection in love. "Love your enemies," the Master declares, "and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be the sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.... Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The manner in which God bestows indiscriminately his favors upon needy man reveals his perfection: by loving as he loves we are to become alike perfect. Luke's version of the saying (Luke 6. 35, 36) exhibits a variation which brings out the thought all the more strikingly: "But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the sons of the Most High: for he is kind toward the unthankful and evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

Why Luke should have "merciful" in the place of Matthew's "perfect" is easier asked than answered: it

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raises the question as to which of the two forms of the saying is nearer the original utterance of our Lord, who spoke in Hebrew or Aramaic. It is commonly held that Luke made the change on purpose, and we may suppose that it was to make it more intelligible to the larger class of Gentile readers. But mercy is but a phase of love, and Matthew's form of the saying is broader in its scope. But we are the gainers by the variation; for this interchange of "perfect" and "merciful" makes love and perfection synonyms in the Christian's vocabulary; it brings us the message that Christianity is the religion of perfect love, and that it is God's will concerning us that we be made perfect in love.

Let us consider, therefore, Christianity, or the Religion of Perfect Love, (1) as representing the culmination of divine revelation; (2) as exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ; and (3) as of highest ethical and practical value to humanity.

1. *The religion of perfect love is the culmination of divine revelation.*

We are accustomed to the contrast that "the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ"; and throughout the part of the Sermon on the Mount that forms the basis for the present lesson a series of contrasts is made between what was and what should be now. Five or six times our Lord takes occasion to say: "Ye have heard it was said, . . . but I say unto you"; and each time takes up the attitude of the Old Testament toward certain essential principles of conduct, showing its imperfection, and pointing out the more excellent way. Thus anger should give way to forgiveness (Matt. 5. 21-26); lust be banished not only from conduct, but even from thought (Matt. 5. 27-32); speaking the truth to be constant, and not only under oath (Matt. 5. 33-37); mercy to take the place of mere justice (Matt. 5. 38-42); and hate give way to love (Matt. 5. 43-48). These contrasts il-

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lustrate the growth of truth; the good must give way to the better; and in the fullness of the times comes the best of all—the religion of perfect love. This progressiveness of divine revelation, reaching its culmination in the gospel of the kingdom, imposes upon us the highest ideals as the only valid for us; and however much we may value the Old Testament revelation, we must regard it, with our Lord, as but a lower stage of divine truth; and we can now follow its precepts or examples only so far as they comport with the fuller light.

But we need to take care lest by overstraining the contrast we do an injustice to the Old Testament; for in it also are we taught God's love to man; man's love to God; and man's love to man. There is no tenderer picture of God's love than is found in the teachings of the prophet Hosea, for instance, when he pictures the relation of Jehovah to Israel as that of a loving husband to his erring wife (Hos. 2); or again, as father and child: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him" (Hos. 11. 1). And we know that the great commandments, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbor as thyself," are Old Testament teaching, and quoted by the Teacher from Deut. 6. 5 and Lev. 19. 18. This is so evident that when the Master says, "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy," the latter statement has been called in question and we are challenged to produce the verse that teaches "Thou shalt hate thy enemy." And it is true that there are no such exact words to be found in the Old Testament; but it is true also that the love taught in the Old Testament is limited by the national horizon. Passages like those just referred to in Hosea, for instance, declare God's love for Israel particularly; and Jonah, the prophet who endeavors to run away from his mission because he fears that his message of repentance might take effect and so avoid the destruction of Nineveh, is a fair example of the narrow and hostile atti-

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tude of the Jew toward other nations. There are a number of passages in the Old Testament that inculcate hatred of Israel's national enemies (Deut. 7. 2); and the Israelite is taught that as regarding the Ammonites and Moabites, "Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days forever" (Deut. 23. 3-6). It is evident also that the law discriminated against the alien, unless he had become fully nationalized (Deut. 15. 3). All this bears out our Lord's stricture of the Old Testament that it teaches hating enemies. But it is to be so no longer; the new kingdom is to have new laws, nay, one all-pervading law—the law of love. It is to be universal, like God's sunshine and rain, doing away with race prejudice, and falling not short of even our enemies. It is ushered in by God's own great example of loving the world by giving his Son, even while we were yet enemies; we are now to love him, because he first loved us; and how can anyone love God and hate his brother? Revealed religion has now reached its maturity; and it can say with Paul, "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things." Christianity, God's final revelation, is the religion of perfect love; and other ideals short of it can no longer suffice.

### *2. The religion of perfect love is realized in the person of Jesus Christ.*

But is the ideal attainable? Is it possible for man to love God with all the heart and our neighbors as ourselves, and broadening out the term "neighbor" to cover the bad as well as the good of all races, and even those that persecute and hate us? We might well realize that we have here no light task. But the answer is, It can be done, for Jesus Christ has done it. Ours is not only the ideal, but the ideal realized. It is said that a book arguing that a steamship is an impossibility was brought over into this country by the

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first steamship crossing the Atlantic. There is nothing so telling as a theory demonstrated by a living example. Jesus Christ, born of a woman, born under the law, tempted in all points even as we are, loved God and man with a perfect love. It was his meat and drink to do God's will. He showed his love to man by associating with those who were looked upon as the outcasts of the society of his time. The Pharisees' greatest objection to him was that he ate with publicans and sinners; to which he answered that the whole had no need of a physician, but the sick; and that he had come not to call the righteous, but sinners. Jesus loved sinful man enough to believe that he could become the child of God; and the sneers of society had no effect to keep him from his task of bringing it about. Neither did he simply teach forgiveness: he loved those that hated and persecuted him, and prayed that his Father might forgive them, for they knew not what they did.

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets; I came not to destroy, but to fulfill," was the claim of Jesus; but we know that love is the fulfilling of the law. It appears, then, that there is an intimate and vital relation between the life of Jesus and the inner meaning of Old Testament religion. That life of self-sacrificing devotion, culminating in his death upon the cross, is the embodiment of the religion of perfect love, bringing to a point and perfecting God's highest ideal for man. It is God's love for man, man's love for God, and man's love for man, all in one, lived in the flesh, and demonstrating its possibility and reality. Instead of trying to tone down the high ideal of this part of the Sermon on the Mount, as is so often done to make it what is called practicable, it were better to declare that it has been lived, and can be lived by all those who will let Christ live in them.

3. *The religion of perfect love is of the highest ethical and practical value to humanity.*

The love that we are discussing is not a mere weak

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sentiment, but rather it is perfectly consistent with righteousness and justice in God and man. Love has righteousness very much at heart. Hence Jesus is very explicit in telling his disciples in intimate connection, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5. 20). Love aims at righteousness as much as the law, only that it has a different and more effective method: it is self-legislating, and works from within rather than from without. It substitutes an inner kinship, a family feeling, for the motives of fear or reward.

The kingdom of God that the prophets and Jesus proclaim is a social order here on earth, where the truest liberty, equality, and fraternity prevail. It involves international relations, honesty and fairness in business, the rights of capital and labor, good government, and many other social problems. But the religion of love, while it believes in civic legislation, has greater hope and faith in the power of love as a social reformatory principle. It believes with Victor Hugo that a Jean Valjean can more effectively be made into a good man by Christian love than by law. It believes that that is God's method by which he endeavors to win us unto himself; and that its success justifies that we endeavor more and more to become, even as our Lord bids us, "perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

## LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 6

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### ALMSGIVING AND PRAYER

GOLDEN TEXT: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them."—Matt. 6. 1 (R. V.).

#### SINCERITY

BY FREDERICK J. SHACKLETON, PH.D.

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In the preceding chapters Christ has set forth the characteristics of citizenship in the new kingdom which he has come to set up, and stated the new law. He passes now to a description of the new life of the kingdom. How significant is the fact that the first word is a warning to guard his followers from the abuses in vogue among the Rabbinical religionists! He is particular to indicate the utter uselessness of hypocrisy in the worship of a purely spiritual God, who, if worshiped at all, must, of necessity, be "worshiped in spirit and in truth."

This warning was prompted by the fact that "this was an age," as Dr. Geikie says, "when the true religious spirit was dead. Outward acts of religion were ostentatiously practiced, at once to earn a reward from God and to secure honor for holiness from men." Against such pretense and insincerity Jesus warns his followers: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them."

To our age, also, this warning comes with equal pertinency. They were at the beginning of the new kingdom, we are in the midst of it. Forms have greatly changed. There is a difference in the methods of practicing righteousness, but there has been no change in its character. There may be changes in the methods of expressing the new life of the kingdom, but the life is

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always the same. Whether these changes have been for the better or the worse, it is safe to say there never was an age in which the followers of Christ needed more to be warned against the danger of substituting the form for the substance of religion. We need to have it impressed on our mind that insincerity has no more place in the kingdom of Christ to-day than when, at the beginning, he warned his followers against the particular forms of it which seemed an abomination to him as he witnessed them, and which drew from him such scathing condemnation at different times during his ministry. Now, as then, it is only sincerity that gives any religious act acceptance with God and secures his favor.

Let us look at this personal appeal; for with gracious concern he passes from the statement of the general requirement of righteousness to the appeal for the personal possession and practice of it by his disciples.

I. *The Personal Possession—“Your Righteousness.”* They must have this real, genuine, inner qualification and spiritual fitness in order to be members of his kingdom. He generously considers them as possessed of it. They are already his voluntary followers, seeking after this new life, of which righteousness is the sum and substance. As a matter of fact, they have it not. But they have elected to have it, because they desire the kingdom. They have been told that they must have it. And because they are consenting to it they are embraced in the kingdom, as having received it. Then he proceeds to talk to them about this personal possession, using such terms as “Be ye perfect” and “Your righteousness.” He says to them directly, about this great possession, “Take heed that your righteousness is not a sham, a pretense, an imitation.” It is the one necessity. Every disciple must have it. Christ came to give it. There is no citizenship without it. In the verse which precedes the text the Lord says, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven

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is perfect." Why "therefore"? Because that is essential Christianity, and they were to be Christians, followers of him, members of his kingdom.

Its first peculiarity lies in the fact that the righteousness which it carries is a disinterested goodness—goodness not for the sake of the blessing to follow it, but for its own sake, and because it is right. He does not first command them to perform religious duties. He beseeches them to think of being like God. Why? Because God is their Father. The nature and possibility of this righteousness is contained in this expression of the preceding verse: "Even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Citizenship in the kingdom means an aspiration for likeness to the Ruler of the kingdom, who makes possible the attainment of it. Hence he assumes that they must have it. Moreover, he assumes that:

II. "*Your Righteousness*" will Have its Outward Expression. Here he warns in particular that you take heed it has a right expression: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them." That implies, in the first place, an expression toward God. The very possession of these characteristics carries with it a desire to perform the duties which will bring the approval of God. But higher than that! If our righteousness is the result of relationship and likeness to the Father, there will naturally be an expression of filial love and obedience arising from the righteous heart within. This inner, spiritual working of our righteousness will make its own secret expression or worship to God.

Moreover, that which is within, as a living characteristic, will have its exemplification in practice, before and to the advantage of men. So our righteousness must have its outward expression, before men. It has, then, to do with God, ourselves, and others. The warning is, "take heed" to this *practice* of the religious forms before men. The command is not that you be

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entirely secret in the performance of religious duties. That could not be. Nor would it be expedient. The correct practice of righteousness, as a state of the heart, makes the most efficient witness for Christ and his kingdom. We are called upon to witness by the right use of forms and functions in worship and work. For the hypocritical following of the mere practices of religion makes us a reproach to Christ and begets the disfavor of God.

III. *The Warning Specifically Applied to Three Common External Acts of Righteousness.* Righteousness, according to Jewish usages, included the three righteous external acts—alms, prayer, and fasting. Christ pleads for the doing of these three religious acts with an eye to God alone, and not to men, “to be seen of them.”

To do alms had been exalted by the scribes to an act in itself meritorious before God. The words “alms” and “righteousness” were indeed used interchangeably. Such were the teachings of the rabbis: “For one farthing given to the poor a man will receive heaven”; “I shall behold thy face in righteousness because of alms”; “He who gives alms will be kept from all evil.” The people commonly said: “This money goes for alms, that my son may live, and that I may obtain the world to come.” It was a common custom for rich men to have their gifts proclaimed in the synagogues. Yet there were many godly Jews who dropped their alms in the famed “temple of the silent”—as it was called—in the temple, and one rabbi held that “he that doeth his alms in secret is greater than Moses himself.”

There is no disparagement here, on the part of Christ, of that great duty so prominently recognized among the Jews. The injunction of kindness to the poor had been received from Moses in his great valedictory speech, and occupied a large place in their religious thought. Christ even enlarged this teaching as belonging to the new kingdom. But he is here saying

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that only sincerity gives charity value. The amount is not the essential thing, the spirit is all.

The Jews were much given to prayer. It was commendable that they were so. Christ was particularly given to prayer. His followers must be given to prayer. Could it need to be said that one must be sincere in talking to God? So it seems. For on this illustration of the need of sincerity Christ has concentrated the interest which he has been kindling by his discourse. By precept and by model he warns them to be sincere in prayer.

With the Pharisees prayer had become a formal, mechanical act, prescribed by exact rules. The hours, the matter, and the manner of prayer were all laid down. The hour of prayer came many times a day, and it was an easy matter to arrange to have it overtake them, wearing their broad phylacteries, at the street corners, where the passers-by might be impressed by their devoutness. They availed themselves of the privilege of going to the sanctuary or synagogue, to display their sanctimoniousness to the congregation. And, as if the length of the prayer had to do with the merit of it, they stood long at their devotions, as the heathen were led to do because they never received answer from their gods. The Romans babbled long prayers. The Mohammedans repeat some phrases in their prayers thirty times. There is no sincerity in this. Among us the mere repetition of prayers, without sincerity, is not an uncommon thing. It was the uselessness of such praying the Lord attempted to teach the world. The members of the new kingdom were to make their prayers in strict secrecy when they prayed for themselves. Why? Because they would address a Father who sees in secret. No man finds it easy to be dishonest, hypocritical, or insincere when talking alone, face to face, with God. No one can there persuade himself that long repetitions mean anything.

Public prayer is not discredited by Christ. He at-

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tended public worship and took part in it. But everywhere it is the spirit, and not the form, that brings acceptance. The simplest, shortest prayer which passes the thought, without expression, is known of God, if it rise from a sincere heart. All rabbis gave forms of prayer to be repeated by their followers. Christ gave an illustration of what a prayer should be like in directness, simplicity, and sincerity. It is a model prayer. It may well be repeated. But Christ wants us to use the spirit of it rather than the form.

Christ used one other illustration of the need of sincerity. Fasting is a practice which in these modern times is almost entirely neglected. It is of value because it relates to ourselves. Many would be greatly helped by the use of it. But if it lacks sincerity it is the most ridiculous of all forms, because in such a matter it is perfectly useless for a man to pretend to himself. If it lacks sincerity, and is not used to promote a state of righteousness by meditation and self-denial, it is used solely to deceive others, and so is more than without merit.

Fasting was a prominent religious usage in Christ's day. They covered their heads with ashes, and neither washed nor anointed themselves. They put on wretched clothing and showed themselves in all the outward forms of mourning. They had their reward, but it was of men only.

Take notice! That is not the style of this new kingdom. "Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

My friends, what does this great appeal of our Lord mean for us? He is saying one thing with tremendous emphasis: With God we must be honest. In the new kingdom we must be sincere.

## LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 13

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### WORLDLINESS AND TRUST

GOLDEN TEXT: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." —Matt. 6. 33.

By HOMER K. EBRIGHT, B.D.

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HENRY DRUMMOND gave an address to boys, treating of the geography, grammar, and arithmetic of this text.

Geography—Where is the kingdom of God? Final answer, The kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17. 21).

Grammar—What is the main verb in the sentence? *Seek*. What mood? Imperative. Who issued the command? The Christ who in this Sermon on the Mount has been placing *his* word over against the commands of the wise men of old time. He has a right to command.

Arithmetic—What are the two "arithmetic words"? *First* and *Added*. Two needed thoughts, the kingdom of God should have first place in our thought and striving; and, the joys of life are not subtracted from, as some imagine, but are added to the Christian.

The Sermon on the Mount, whether considered as one address by Jesus or as compiled by the writer of the Gospel from several talks by Christ, may well be studied as the Inaugural Address of the King. Its theme is the Kingdom of Heaven. The King himself is proclaiming his policy. These are not the unwarranted conjectures of subordinate officers. This is what the King himself says. He comes at once to the point. There is no juggling with words to conciliate various factions; no Delphic utterances framed to be interpreted either way. He is not afraid of being de-

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feated at the next election. These words are final. They cut to the heart. They are the truth.

The citizens of the kingdom of heaven are the poor in spirit, the gentle, the pure in heart, the peacemakers. Their righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees, it is to be a thing of the heart. That will make the Ten Commandments take on a higher meaning. The citizens of this kingdom are to love their enemies. They will give alms, pray, and fast in secret, seeking not the applause of men but the praise of God. They will not make their chief ambition the laying up treasure on earth. Theirs will be a loftier aim, the building houses in heaven. They will not be unduly anxious about what they are to eat, drink, or wear. The Father's eye keeps watch, and he who clothes the flowers will clothe his children well; and he who feeds the birds will prepare for us a table even in the presence of our enemies. But life is more than food and raiment. Therefore seek first the kingdom of God, seek to find it and to spread it, and trust God.

I. *The Nature of the Kingdom of Heaven.* Having briefly summarized the fifth and sixth chapters of Matthew to get the setting for the text, let us consider more carefully the nature of the kingdom of heaven. In all ages men have dreamed of isles of the blessed and Elysian fields. Some have dreamed of Utopias in this world. But in all these dreams only externals have been considered. Pindar sings:

For them the night all through,  
In that broad realm below,  
The splendor of the sun spreads endless light;  
'Mid rosy meadows bright, . . .  
There with horses and with play  
With games and lyres they while the hours away.

And Plato in his ideal republic, and modern dreamers, plan only for an equitable distribution of property and the elimination of poverty, that should accompany the coming of the kingdom of heaven. But the first char-

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acteristic of the kingdom of heaven is that it is *inward*. Facts prove that men can be rich and educated and yet vile. Nations have been prosperous and cultured but rotted away because of their sin. The kingdom of heaven is in the heart of men. Paul said, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14. 17). Jesus declared, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17. 21). And it is certainly true that if the world of men seek this inward kingdom, the outward marks of a Utopia will be added unto us.

The second essential characteristic of the kingdom is *righteousness*. The King was approached by the tempter, who urged him to lower his standard of requirements, saying, "All these things will I give you if you fall down and worship me." Jesus answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." No outward glory can compare with the glory of righteousness.

II. *The Relation of the Religious and the Secular.* If the kingdom of heaven is thus inward and righteous, it is necessary for the Christian to have a clear understanding of the relation of this kingdom to the world. In what sense is the Christian not of this world? In what sense are the ideas "kingdom of heaven" and "this present world" antithetical? What is the right relation of the religious and the secular?

John writes, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Monasticism was an attempt to subdue the world by running away from it. Why did the monastic life appear in the church? Partly because the church early became so worldly and politically entangled that men despaired of finding God in society. So arose distorted

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notions that the hermit was a peculiarly holy man, and that the Christian who mingled with men and engaged in business was not seeking the kingdom of God. And the notion grew that sackcloth in itself and coarse clothes and stripes were pleasing to the Lord. Thus while monasticism gave some noble characters to the church, it also fostered the idea that the kingdom of heaven differed from the world in external things.

The external world is not evil. It is the creation of God. It manifests his glory. The divine artist who paints his matchless colors on the evening sky and decorates the heavens with the inimitable rainbow loves beauty, and so should his children. What, then, is the world that we are commanded not to love? It is the transient in so far as it prevents a man from seeing the eternal; the visible in so far as that prevents a man from seeing the invisible; the physical in so far as that prevents a man from perceiving the spiritual. The visible world should help a man to understand the invisible things of God; and in Romans Paul declares that the Gentiles who are guilty of nameless crimes are without excuse, because from the things that are seen they could know the God who is not seen. But men often permit the physical to take their eyes from the spiritual. Worldliness consists in being so absorbed in the questions, What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed? that one has no time to meditate on the more important things. Worldliness is getting things out of their proportion. Worldliness is living on the outside.

Worldliness, then, is denying that God has any place in the affairs of my life. Monasticism, on the other hand, was denying that the affairs of the world have any place in the kingdom of heaven. The true Christian view is that God has a place in all the interests of life, and that all work, great and small, if done well and in his name, is a service to the kingdom of God. There is no real distinction between the religious and

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secular. All work nobly done and well is religious. And it is a saving doctrine that a man can be seeking the kingdom of heaven in the carpenter shop with Jesus, and making tents with Paul, and mending nets with the fishermen of Galilee. Among the sayings of Jesus as recorded on the papyrus fragment unearthed at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt, a few years ago, was the unique statement, "Raise the stone and thou shalt find me, cleave the wood and there am I." At the quarry and in the forest, in the sick room and in the pulpit, an earnest man can seek and find the kingdom of heaven. But let us remember that it is not the stone nor the wood that represents the kingdom, but the inward gentleness, purity, and love.

Many men desire to see the kingdom of God come, but they do not seek it *first*. What do I care most for in life? Worldliness is ignoring God or putting the kingdom of heaven last.

III. *The Blessedness of the Life of Trust.* The man whose mind is absorbed with the things of this world lives a life of anxiety. This is a world where thieves break through and steal, where moth and rust corrupt. Since a man's heart is always where his treasure is, if his treasure is abundant crops, when the hail or the flood or the drought comes his heart is broken; if his treasure is tall structures of stone and steel, when the irresistible fire comes his spirit is dead; if his treasure is a prosperous manufacturing establishment, when the panic comes he is driven to despair. Not so with the man who seeks first the kingdom of God. He may have large flocks and many houses, but when poverty and sickness come he can say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

The man who seeks first the things of the world will miss the kingdom of heaven; but the man who seeks first the kingdom of heaven will gain heaven and also all needful things of this world.

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The lesson of trust! Can the student learn it? The birds and the flowers will continue to teach it, and the gentle influences of the Holy Spirit will prompt us to cast all our burden upon the Lord. We shall go on stumbling, perhaps, under the weight of our burdens; but let us seek the continuing restfulness of making the temporal needs secondary and believing that "God's in his heaven" and that "All things work together for good to them that love God."

## LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 20

### THE GOLDEN RULE

GOLDEN TEXT: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."—Matt. 7. 12.

### THE UNSELFISH USE OF SELF

BY ALBERT OSBORN, B.D.

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THE needs of the world are met in Jesus Christ. "Peace on earth" was the wide greeting at his birth. "Go ye into all the world" was his last general order to his disciples. "Preach the gospel to every creature" was his distributive command on behalf of each mind and heart of the race. We are not surprised, then, that in his formal announcement of the foundations of the kingdom of God among men, which appears in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus should give to his disciples this universal rule of practice, this gist of "the law and the prophets," this "central axiom of right," this "divine concentration of human morality," this "test of social justice," this "truly Golden Rule."

I. This is the core and trunk of the Christian's code of living. In its development for application to the actual conduct of the individual it branches into all the varied social relations, and these in turn are consummated in the uncounted acts—the thoughts, the words, the deeds—of our ongoing life.

Examine and resolve into its component parts this seemingly simple rule, and first you find its express terms, which are four:

"Whatsoever ye would" is the first. The standard of our action toward others as here given is self—self-knowledge, self-interest, self-choosing, self-wishing.

The second factor named is self in relation to

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others—the social complicity of the individual with his fellows. “Men” and “ye” are spoken of as on a common level of equality before the law of God.

The third distinct feature announced is the application of self-knowledge to all of one’s attitudes and actions toward others—“Do ye to them.”

The fourth factor is in thought the mutual exchange of situations, as an indispensable preparation for the fulfillment of one’s duty to others—“Whatsoever ye,” “even so.” Here we find the crux of the problem of doing right. The faithful follower of Him who “saved others, himself he” could “not save,” makes this rule the flaming guidon on the daily march of his life.

II. Like all constitutional laws, this fundamental principle in Christian ethics involves much more than its express terms at first thought seem to declare. Make an honest and thorough interpretation of the real content and conditions implied in this brief and beautiful summary. May He who gave this great law of human conduct and first illumined it by his own example guide us as we seek to trace its evolution into the manifold acts which swiftly weave our habits, leave their deposit in character, and steadily form our destiny.

First, the making of self the standard of a right dealing with others implies a distinct recognition of one’s own personality, a clear consciousness of self-existence. This self-knowledge is to be the point of departure in the unceasing series of acts toward his fellows, and as such demands a proper regard and respect for self.

The second factor of the great rule, self in relation to others, implies a distinct and hearty recognition of the personality of others, an adequate appreciation of their value, a sympathetic measure of their needs, a just estimate of their potentialities and capacities—in short, a studied attempt to see others as we see ourselves.

The third implied element is a positive outgoing effort for the benefit of others. No mere indolent passive abstinence from injurious deeds fulfills the spirit

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of the rule. Confucius, the moral teacher of the Orient, taught that whatsoever you would not that men should do to you, do ye not to them. The general observance of that teaching would rid the world of myriad wrongs and inequities. The rule for Christian conduct universally obeyed would do more, vastly more. It would substitute fruitful virtue for destructive vice. By its all-inclusive welldoing the wilderness of sin would disappear and a garden of the fruits of the Spirit would spring in its place. Moreover, this doing, though in the logic of the text it comes after a knowledge of self and self-interest, is to be a swift, almost simultaneous sequel, practically a perpetual, perennial stream of blessing to others.

The fourth and last implication of the Golden Rule is the most important, the most difficult of all. It is this: In the mutual exchange of our own situation with that of another, we must carry with us our knowledge and convictions as to the higher, deeper, true needs of men, such as we have received from our contact with the Christ. Any other interpretation would make the rule a nullity; would rob it of even the semblance of any real altruistic quality and cancel its ethical character; for it would simply command us to make an even exchange of all we are and have for all that the other is and has, and the situation would be precisely the same as before the exchange, save in the personalities involved.

This transfer of one's mind enlightened and clarified by the instruction of the Great Teacher is a point where professed Christians often fail in their endeavor to observe the Golden Rule. The failure, alas! sometimes is that of heart sympathy; but more frequently it is due to an imperfect imagination which prevents one from successfully putting himself in another's place. It is the lack of thought rather than of feeling; a forgetting of the apostolic injunction, "Look not every man on his own things, but also on the things of others."

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In his great book, *Put Yourself in His Place*, that powerful picture of industrial life in England in the last century, Charles Reade says: "This 'great transmigratory act,' although it comes of itself only to a few superior minds, can be taught to vast numbers; and were it to be taught as generally as reading and writing, that teaching alone would quadruple the intelligence of mankind and go far to double its virtue."

An amusing instance of a but partial success in an endeavor to put one's self in another's place occurred at the recent unveiling of the statue of Longfellow in Washington, D. C. Chief Justice Fuller presiding introduced Dr. Charles Wood, of the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, to offer the invocation. The afternoon sun was beating upon the face and uncovered head of Dr. Wood as he stood near the edge of the uncanopied platform. Bishop Mackay-Smith, of Philadelphia, standing near and glancing at the upturned face of his praying brother, quietly stepped to his side, raised his umbrella, and held it, as he supposed, so as to shield Dr. Wood's face from the sun in an atmosphere already in the nineties. My own watching at this moment was due to the impossibility of hearing the words of the prayer on account of the rustle of the foliage, the hum of the crowd, and the roar of the street. The eye came to the help of a straining ear. The two men are each of more than ordinary girth. The bishop's attitude indicated his brotherly sympathy with the presbyter, while his face and partly bowed head showed his approval of the petitions and his reverence for the function in progress. But he fell short in the measurement of his own diameter and that of his brother minister, as also in his guess at the obliqueness of the sunbeams. As a consequence Dr. Wood's face was now in the shade and now in the glare, according as the bishop's arm wavered from right to left, or left to right, or backward and forward. The failure was not in intention, but in execution.

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Thus we often fail to put ourselves in the place of another as to physical, mental, and spiritual needs. But a persistent purpose and repeated effort will give any ordinary person the art of putting himself in another's place with sufficient accuracy to secure substantial justice and yet without becoming a meddlesome intruder into another's affairs.

*III. A Peril or a Privilege.* Like all things golden, the Golden Rule may become to us either a danger or a privilege. The danger lies in our resting satisfied with the intellectual symmetry of the law as a splendid piece of mental mechanism, kept for occasional description or exhibition. Thus would it become a cold, idle, glittering object of curiosity, like the model of a machine in some museum, securely caged from all possible activity. The real usefulness of the Golden Rule lies in its being enacted into deeds by men and women filled with the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit through personal faith in and surrender to Christ. Such people constantly try to love their neighbors as themselves.

*IV. A Practical Application in the Field of Temperance.* We find a great variety of social relations in which the Golden Rule may and should be practiced, such as the reciprocal duties of parent and child, teacher and pupil, lawyer and client, physician and patient, pastor and member, host and guest, employer and employed, native and foreigner, ruler and subject.

Let us narrow our view to the single issue of intoxicating liquor as a beverage. The observance of the Golden Rule in the Christian's relations to the maker, the vender, the custodian, the conveyer, and the drinker of the inebriating cup may be simplified and graphically expressed by the one comprehensive verdict which the informed, educated, aroused conscience of the average American citizen is now beginning to pronounce against the business as a whole. Here it is: The traffic in intoxicating liquors as a beverage is a public nuisance—

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in politics, a corrupter of citizenship; in economics, a waster of wealth and of wealth-making power, and a promoter of bankruptcy and pauperism; in morals, a destroyer of character and of loyalty to high ideals; the maker of criminals, dependents, and defectives; in the home, the breaker of hearts and of hearthstones, the robber of the sacred rights of children to bread, to clothing, to shelter, to affection, to education; in the state and nation, a usurper that threatens all the most precious treasures in the life of the people—nay, more, that life itself.

One of the deepest stains on the escutcheon of ancient Athens was the sentence and execution of its noblest citizens by vote of the assembly. The insane jealousies of inferior minds brought death to Socrates and to Phocion, whose virtues and talents give the brightest luster to their age. When Phocion and his faithful few were brought to execution, his companions took of the poison before him and there was none left for Phocion. The executioner declared he would not serve Phocion unless there was first put into his hand twelve drachmas, the cost of an ounce of hemlock. Phocion called one of his friends, and that his death might not be delayed said to him, "Since a man cannot die in Athens without paying for it, I beg you pay the executioner his price."

The Christian's love to his neighbor, to his state, to his country, to his race, forbids his tolerance of so universal a curse and prompts him to do all he can to deliver the maker, the seller, the purveyor, the carrier, and the user from this beverage of hell and its awful blight. The people will not forever consent to be put under sentence of death and out of their own purse to pay for the poison draught.

## LESSON FOR FEBRUARY 27

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### FALSE AND TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

GOLDEN TEXT: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."—Matt. 7. 21.

By LEVI GILBERT, D.D., LITT.D.

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JESUS has been styled by Renan "the Galilean dreamer." But surely no man who ever lived was more rigorously and absolutely practical. Nietzsche, the half-insane German philosopher, represents him as a "decadent," setting forth a doctrine of passivity, of unheroic submissiveness, or world-renunciation, which was destructive of the vigor and rightful self-assertiveness of true manhood and of the superman to come. But Jesus was neither dreamer, enthusiast, nor weakling. His idealism was a realizable conception. His mysticism kept close to earth. His teaching made men not nerveless and inefficient, but capable and strong to live and die. The tests that he put forth of discipleship were not theoretical. They based themselves on the most uncompromising demands of reality. He never represented it as an easy, summer-day task to keep "these sayings of mine," which struck a higher note for conduct than the world had ever heard before. The way unto the life that he portrayed was not by any broad and thronged avenues of natural inclinations and desires and popular ethical standards. It called for the denial of the lower self for the sake of the higher—for entering on a narrow road through an un-wide gate.

Beware of cant—beware of *cant!* This is the word that Jesus would force down into the minds of his disciples in all time. Shun, as the very infection of death,

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all hypocrisies, shams, make-believes, disguises, subterfuges, superficialities, pretenses. First, last, and all the time be real—be *real!* This, most manifestly, is his message.

To those who would complacently compliment him on the sermon he had just delivered on the mount—"a great effort," "a fine talk"—he would reply severely and exactingly, "*Do what I say.*" He could excuse anyone from speaking eulogistic and flattering things about him if they would only take his words and go out and live by them. All the panegyrics of Christ which have ever been delivered by preachers or orators, or written by rhetoricians, are worse than clanging cymbals, with their empty noisiness, if the effort at downright obedience to his commandments be lacking.

In thus putting the test of true discipleship on performance rather than on profession, Jesus connects himself with all the prophets before him who represented Jehovah as saying that he had had enough of ceremonies and sacrifices—of burnt offerings and blood offerings—of vain oblations, incense-burning, stated prayers—all of which he hated with an utter loathing and weariness, and could tolerate no more—and that what he asked was simply ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, seeking justice, relieving the oppressed, judging the fatherless, pleading for the widow.

Beneath whatever sheep's clothing of pretended innocence Jesus sees the poor deceptions and masqueradings of them "that work iniquity," and detects the ravening, wolflike, unregenerated passions of the pitiable play actors. His clear eyes penetrate right down to the depths of the soul. Nothing can stand before him but the uncontaminated life flowing out of the pure heart. Given the select, sound-hearted fruit tree, the luscious pear or peach is a natural sequence, a matter of course. No delicious pippin can be plucked from an acrid crab-apple tree. While a man keeps within him a nature purified and sanc-

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tified by the Spirit he cannot act devilishly. The soul perverted and malignant through sin cannot comport itself in saintly fashion, and all its would-be attempts are the most transparent fraudulencies and knaveries. *Be good and you will do good.* No grapes from thorns, no figs from thistles! He who will not observe this primary law of all moral existence and conduct will precipitate his life at last upon calamity and disgrace. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire!" No method of discriminating and estimating in a final judgment upon men could be fairer or more equitable than this: "By their fruits ye shall know them," not by their pretensions. It is the same code which will prevail at the last day, when neither professions nor creeds, neither worldly position nor genius, neither orthodoxy nor church connections will endure the investigation before the Great Assize, but only whether the individual was kind, just, sympathetic, humane, helpful. "*Inasmuch as ye did it*"—"*Inasmuch as ye did it not*"—on these two sentences the balance will go up or down in the weighing of souls.

Thus the line of cleavage between true and false discipleship comes clearly before us. To every virtue there is its counterfeit. Piety is mimicked by pietism; sanctity by sanctimoniousness; religion by religiosity; sentiment by sentimentality; patriotism by fustian; emotion by hysteria; obedience by legalism; morality by moralism; worship by formalism; prayer by vain repetition; love by affectation; loyalty by the traitor's kiss.

It is much easier to be baptized than to maintain that inner purity without which no man shall see God. It is easier to bow at the name of Jesus in the Creed than it is to follow him in daily living in a world full of temptations and low ideals. It is easier to babble thoughtlessly through routine petitions than it is to pray from the heart with true faith and sincere

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supplication. It is easier to go to church and sing hymns than it is to fight organized evils and contend patiently and heroically for right and justice. It is easier to repeat unctuously, "Lord, Lord," than it is to carry out the principles of Jesus in the social, political, commercial, and industrial life of to-day.

Emotion in religion has its valid and indisputable place when it surges up from the depths of the being and bears its own evidence that deep answers unto deep—that God and the soul meet in the rapture of recognition and love. But a fictitious and vapid emotionalism, easily stirred and as quickly evaporated—the mock-heroics of true and pure feeling—may simulate the genuine passion and be frequently taken for it. But "weeping will not save me." When shallow natures blubber over the misfortunes of the heroine in the novel, or on the stage, they may imagine themselves very soft-hearted and sympathetic, but it remains to be seen whether they will lend a hand to some neighbor in real distress. Saint James had little use for those Pecksniffian, oleaginous personages who could pompously say to a brother or sister, naked and in lack of food, "Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled," and who stopped right there. Laurence Sterne, it is said, could snivel over the dead body of a donkey in the street and then go home and beat his wife. It is not a very strenuous prescription for attaining a moral life to nod approval to the preacher, or to mentally assent to the excellent maxims and conclusions of moral essayists or writers on religion or ethics.

Even in the ministry there is danger of lapsing into professionalism—of making a sacred, personal calling and relationship purely a way of making a living; of composing and delivering sermons simply because they must be composed and delivered, because Sunday has come around and the congregation will be expecting the usual thing; of offering the public prayer because it is a part of the regular order.

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And yet a worse thing than this perfunctoriness may happen. Even while the minister or the evangelist may have fallen into open wickedness, he may go on, as some have, proclaiming the precious truths of the gospel with almost more fervor than before, and souls will be saved under his ministry. "Have we not cast out demons by thy name?" will be the plea of such. "Have we not preached great sermons? have we not done many mighty works of reform by thy name?" And then will come back to them the solemn answer of doom: "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

But such making of their calling a mere conventionalism, mannerism, or a hideous contradiction is not to be found in the clergy alone. The politician whose love for country is purely self-interest; the lawyer who cares more to win his case on technical points than he does for the triumph of justice; the teacher who fossilizes into a dried-up pedant; the head of a charity organization who becomes "institutionalized," his sympathies rubbed callous by overfamiliarity with poverty and suffering; the editor whose writings express the conclusions that he is best paid for; the newspaper proprietor who is a journalist only for profit, pandering to the public's passions to reach a larger circulation; and the business man who scruples at nothing to get gain and down a competitor—all of these are in the same condemnation. They are all hollow at the core. They are base metal which does not ring true. There can be but one end to such jockeying with the moral universe. It is the end which came to the house of that inconsiderate and foolish man who, because it was the laziest and easiest thing to do, built a house down on the sand of the river bottoms, not reflecting upon the spring torrents, the rains, the winds, the floods which were sure to come. And then the tragedy—"Great was the fall of it!" Man must build the house of his life on the immovable

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foundation of enduring principle and adamantine conviction.

“He that heareth these sayings of mine *and doeth them*”—he “that heareth these sayings of mine *and doeth them not*”—in that affirmative and in that negative lie the differences between holiness and wickedness, characters good or evil, lofty success or ignominious failure, imperishable joy or indescribable despair, heaven or hell.

It must be, then, a matter of the supremest importance to know precisely what are the teachings of Christ—what his commandments. And there can be no more urgent duty incumbent upon men than to study his declarations as to heart-purity; mercifulness; love for neighbor and enemy alike; sincerity; cleanliness in sex relationships; unostentation in doing good; simplicity in prayer; joyfulness in religious worship; service for others rather than devotion to avarice and self-seeking; the maintenance of an uncontaminated conscience; undivided loyalty to God and the right; freedom from all undue anxiety which contradicts trust in a good Providence; abstinence from cynicism and mean criticism of others; unstinting forgiveness; belief in the existence of God and in prayer and its sure answer; the need of putting the primary emphasis on seeking to bring in God’s kingdom of justice and peace on earth, and hungering with a keen appetite for righteousness in oneself and in society; doing to others as one would have others do to him.

There is danger of disastrous reaction when feelings are constantly excited and no activity follows. Do we “enjoy the sermon”? Let us follow its admonitions. Do we sigh for service in unselfishness? Let us act on our repents and resolutions. Do we have deep convictions? Let us not, like Pharaoh, harden our hearts. Do we behold at times the heavenly vision of possibilities in the spirit life? Let us not be disobedient to it!

## LESSON FOR MARCH 6

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### JESUS THE HEALER

GOLDEN TEXT: "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."—Matt. 8. 17.

BY LUTHER B. WILSON, D.D., LL.D.

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IT had been a busy day in the life of our Lord. He had met the centurion whose servant lay at home sick and grievously tormented. With a faith at which Jesus marveled the master accepted the word of Jesus and the servant was restored. He had entered into Peter's house and laid his hands upon the fever-smitten there, and she who had been ill, restored to perfect health, arose and ministered unto the household.

The sun had set, and twilight had deepened into darkness, but the people, recognizing the day of their gracious visitation, were still bringing to him those who were diseased, and the Great Physician healed them every one. It was not strange, therefore, that he who wrote this word should call to mind the prophecy of Isaiah, should remember the marks by which the Messiah might be recognized, and, following the tender delineation of his character as set forth in the fifty-third chapter of that prophecy, should see in the happenings of those days the prophecy fulfilled, and say with wondering gladness, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

Though the words are elsewhere applied chiefly to spiritual conditions, it was not strange for one who looked beneath the mere appearances and read beyond the letter to see here interpreted the old prophecy. As we read it to-day, it has a meaning that all can comprehend, for it is in terms with which all are familiar. It

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voices for us the sympathy of Jesus with humanity, not alone in the great soul conflicts in which so many of us are worsted, but in the sorrows of life of which all know, and in the ills which touch our physical nature. It would be strange indeed if when he takes account of us, considering the littles as well as the greats of human life, he could fail in noting that which is so tremendously significant to us. If he sees the fluttering sparrow, wounded, falling to the earth; if he takes account of field and flower, but yet gives to mankind a place in the creation assigned to no other creature, how could he fail to note the furrow deepening on the brow, the flush upon the cheek, the eyes brimming with tears, the feet that lag painfully upon the way of duty; and knowing our distresses, how could he fail to enter into the heartache of the world? The great commanders stepping over the battlefields that have been swept by the deadly fire of the enemy, and looking into the faces of their fallen soldiers, must always feel their hearts moved by what they read there of physical anguish. The true philanthropist can but feel the yearning of a great pitying desire as he looks upon the squalor of the world, hearing the moan of men and the crying of the little children, and seeing the tearless grief of those who, bowed under the burden, cannot even pause for the luxury of tears.

In a deep sense motherhood takes the infirmities and bears the sicknesses of the loved, keeping her unsleeping vigil beside her suffering child, called by the faintest moan to minister. The cords of her heart vibrate when the cords of the other heart are touched, and in a measure which one does not always understand does she bear the sicknesses of those whom love has bound to her. As in the old, old days the high priest of Israel carried the names of the tribes upon his shoulder and breast, so bears motherhood the burden of her love. But Jesus takes the infirmities and bears the sicknesses of men in a sense deeper than human love can

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do, by as much as there are depths in his nature beyond the limit of our lines.

Surely there is reality in the sympathy of Jesus, but there is more than the sorrow of a loving heart in what the world saw when the incarnate Son of God walked the earth. There was the taking away of the infirmities and of the diseases. He must be blind indeed who does not see the attestation of divine power in the healing miracles of our Lord. No theory of the Christ life which does not start with the denial of the Divinity can fail to recognize the disappointing stretch which lies between the accomplishment of human skill and the works of Jesus. In that day, before the world had come to know its Lord, he must prove his power to be a Saviour, and must show that God is love. He could not pass by the blind and leave him in darkness; he could not pass by the leper and leave him uncleansed. When he spake the darkness fled; the ears of the deaf were unstopped, the tongue of the dumb was loosed, and the dead arose. In his work, the wayfaring man, though a fool, could read his sympathy, writ large, and now that he has passed into heaven we call to mind what he said and did. The lines of pity upon his dear face are the lines which make him glorious to our faith. He takes and he bears, so that we see him as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and we remember that once when a patient touched him she was healed, but it was written how he perceived that virtue had gone out of him. Yet it will not be said that either the infirmities or the sicknesses are transferred to Jesus. He takes the burden of the leper, but there is not the taint of leprosy upon him. He lifts the curtain for the blind, yet does not himself enter into darkness. So when he loosens Zaccheus from his fettering selfishness he does not feel the thrall of the narrow soul, and he is still the crystal Christ though he takes away the crimson sins of man.

Having securely fixed the foundation of faith, he

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has risen to be for evermore enthroned; still we believe he looks upon the sobbing world, still takes our infirmities and bears our sicknesses. He is still the pitying Christ, yesterday, to-day, and forever. Still he enters into the heart sorrow of man, but he is working out the consummate purpose of the kingdom, making ready that new city which is to be, and that new age for which with the sacrifice of Calvary he has purchased the right of uttermost redemption. The theory has occasionally been advanced that sin and sickness must necessarily be dealt with in the same way, and that in respect of both it is reasonable for faith to expect constantly the divine interposition. The story, however, of many a saintly life, with its record of suffering, would show that the very affliction has had its helpful lesson. As in the furnace long ago with the Hebrew children the form of the Fourth was seen, so here many another saint has, like Saint Paul, come to glory in infirmities and afflictions, crying out, "When I am weak, then am I strong." The manifestation of the abundant grace has called forth the song, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The miracle of triumphant grace has by many a suffering saint been accounted as greater than that of pain's relief. It is not difficult to see how, in such a case, it is love which withholds the blessing asked, that it may grant a greater good. It was the loving Christ who waited when the sisters of Bethany sent their plea to him, saying, in words which illumine the Master's life, "Lazarus, whom thou lovest, is sick." To-day we know that it was for very love's sake that he tarried—love, indeed, which must have suffered because for the hours it seemed to deny the importunate request. But beyond this it is not difficult to see that, for the larger good, men must be thrown on their own resources, and must learn for themselves the way

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to the mastery of the physical world. He has opened for all believers, and forever, the gate of pardon; has made clear the way into the treasure house of his grace; but may it not be a supreme achievement of love to make law glorious, and may it not be reckoned as a grant of the condescending Christ that men beholding him, and inspired by his divine self-forgetfulness, dominated by his influence, are permitted to participate in the work of the kingdom? If our ascended Lord has in large part given over to men the healing of their kind and the correction of physical ills, it does not mean less of love with him or of power. If he does not always answer the prayer for healing as in the days of the flesh, we may well believe that it is because he has brought in another method which means intensely and means good.

We can never forget that word in the upper room, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." We are beginning to spell out the meaning of this word as we see the deserts blossoming as the rose; as men who have caught the mind of the Master and have armed themselves with his gospel go on their conquering way through all the continents, thrilling us with the praiseful news sent back from the ends of the earth. We are coming likewise to see the meaning of that word as science, with penetration into the causes of human suffering, changes conditions and gives immunity from the old ills, or where it cannot prevent them, then heroically seeks to find a cure and with a devotion never surpassed by soldier on the field of battle, or martyr in the flames, persists until the remedy is found. Yes, the prophecy is one whose fulfillment shall one day be written not in terms of the spiritual life alone, but also in terms of physical ministry.

It is not enough that we sing the praises of Jesus of

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Nazareth, and believing in him crown him with our adoration. We must crown him with our imitation too. He stands over against the suffering world, saying, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." The duty of ministry and the privilege of fellowship are one.

The promise shall surely come true, and then it shall be seen that the exploit is not only to the praise of man, but likewise to the glory of Him who lifted up a cross for faith, who showed the path to love, and who beckons us that way. He took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses. Those who follow him can never be beguiled by the contemplation of heaven from noting the hard and rugged aspects of earth; can never forget the whole content of life's problem, must not forget the needs of men, must minister to souls but likewise to bodies, and so must strive to make the city of to-day, as far as may be, like the city of the golden to-morrow, crowding out of its gates so much of shadow and burden as patient love toiling with science can banish, and bringing in so much of strength and song as may be gained and given.

It is a blessed word which Matthew writes. Let us find comfort in it for our faith and a pattern for life's plan.

## LESSON FOR MARCH 13

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### TWO MIGHTY WORKS

GOLDEN TEXT: "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"—Matt. 8. 27.

BY GEORGE H. LORAH, D.D.

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IN the Louvre picture gallery of Paris there is a painting by Rembrandt entitled "Saint Matthew the Evangelist." It is a picture of lights and shadows, as are so many of Rembrandt's, and represents Matthew as a strong-faced, bearded man engaged in writing. One hand holds the pen; the other is raised in an attitude of thought to his beard. His eyes are not on the page before him, but look into space, as though he were both thinking deeply and waiting. Behind him, in the shadow, is a figure with only the face and one hand visible. The hand is placed upon Matthew's shoulder, and the face is close to his ear as though giving to him the thought and even the word. A few weeks ago I stood and looked on the picture and had my understanding of this thoughtful and straightforward man, who writes the Gospel of this lesson, refreshed. Let us think of the author whose words we are studying as a strong, careful, inspired man.

The chapter of which the lesson forms a part is a chapter of mastery—mastery over sickness; mastery over winds and waves shaking the sea with "earthquake" force, as is the literal meaning of the verb; and mastery over the mysterious realm of the spirit world. And He who holds and wields this mastery so superbly is Jesus the Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary.

1. *Notice the affrighted disciples. Their fear and*

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lack of faith is the snapping of what would be regarded as the strongest link of their nature. They were fishermen and sailors. They knew the sea, and had experience of its storms. They were accustomed to winds and waves. And yet here is where fear overtakes them and almost submerges their faith. They failed where failure would be least expected. So also did Peter in his denial, and Elijah in his panic and discouragement. Let us remember that no matter what our natural strength and experience and skill, Jesus, rather than these, must be the Source of our confidence and the Inspiration of our living. The man who looks to self, rather than to Jesus, invites disaster and shipwreck.

2. *But notice, too, their confidence in Jesus.* He was not a fisherman or sailor, and was not supposed to know as much about winds and waves as they did; yet in the stress of the storm they instinctively turn to him. Their cry to him shows faith and its lack in one and the same breath. "We perish," was their lack of faith; "Lord, save us," was their faith. It was a "little faith," as Jesus says in his loving rebuke to them, but it led to the quieting of wind and wave, and to safety. Let us not despise "little faith." It is not perfect, but it may lead to perfection. It may be weak and lacking; yet if it bring us to Christ it will have put us in the way of blessing and strength.

We read that they *marveled*. We search the account to find an expression of gratitude, thanksgiving, or love, but search in vain. Mark says, "They feared"; and Luke, "being afraid, they wondered." Wonder, fear, and astonishment, but no expression of loving gratitude. Phillips Brooks once observed that there was a time when men seemed to be so busy in wondering at God that they forgot to love him. Every day, as we see the unfoldings of divine wisdom and power, there is much to cause wonder and amazement; much at which we must marvel. But let us not expend all of our emotion in marveling at his works. Let them call

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forth our gratitude, our adoration, our love. Surely the Son of God did not perform miracles merely to make people marvel and wonder, but to strengthen their faith, to establish their love, and to bring them to him in fealty and devotion.

3. *Notice also Christ the Master.* He is Master over the untamed forces of the wind. Men have tried to conquer the powers of the air, and of late years they have been gaining victories. Crafts have been made which have navigated the air and been under the control of their navigators. But at all times it has been a doubtful control, because of air currents, which, blowing from unexpected quarters or with unforeseen force, baffled the most experienced aerial navigator. But he, in the presence of the wildest exhibition of wind power, controls it with a word. And he is Master over the sea. Of it a poet wrote, "Time writes no wrinkles on thy azure brow." It is forever young, lusty, and active. Its billows rage and foam. Kings have tried to command it, and they have been forced to retreat before its incoming tide. But Jesus stands in the little boat which is receiving earthquake shocks from the sea's pounding billows, and commands them to be still; and a great calm follows. This is not the way of the ocean. Though the beating winds may cease, the waves will remain in heaving turmoil for hours afterward. When the Master speaks the word, however, wind and wave obey at once, and there is tranquillity.

He is Master, also, over the forces of evil spirits. The disturbances which have raged over winds and waves are silenced by his word. Now the battle for mastery is transferred to the realm of mind and spirit. On the other side of the lake in the country of the Gergesenes he is met by two possessed with devils. And they know him. Scribes and Pharisees may cavil and doubt, but these give him title and power: "Jesus, thou Son of God, art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" The burrowing mole may be half blind and

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unseeing; but his shrinking from light is testimony to its brightness. And these who flee from men to swine, anywhere to escape Him, give in their sudden wickedness marvelous testimony to his purity and divinity. He stands before them with perfect poise. Scientists tell us that in dealing with disordered minds it is necessary above all else to have self-control. And Jesus from his victories of the night comes and stands before these, who both fear and hate him, with perfect self-possession. It has been remarked that Shakespeare's "King Lear" got its first popularity not because of the depth of feeling portrayed, but by the fact that the ravings of the poor old king seemed humorous to a coarse-grained age. But Jesus stands in the presence of these in whom God's image has been dethroned with pity, love, and mastery. He speaks the word "Go," and the devils obey him even as did the winds and the waves.

How can we be helped by these evidences of his mastery? Men and women are not perfect. Fears catch hold of them. Doubt surrounds them like a wet drab fog. Everything is against them, and they forget that Jesus is with them in the boat; sharing their life, whatever it is, with them. He is not upon some Olympus mount, drinking the nectar of the gods, indifferent to the winds and waves of life. He is in the boat; he is a part of life. All things were made by him, and are continually upheld by him. Having made the world, he did not leave the machine to run itself. The winds may bellow, and the waves may beat; but where winds and waves are, there he is also. Let our hearts take faithful hold of this truth that he is not like those man-made gods who

live and lie reclined  
On the hills, like gods together, careless of mankind;  
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled  
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly  
curled  
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;

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Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,  
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and  
fiery sands,  
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and  
praying hands—  
But they smile.

And he is the Lord of the wayward forces. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," he said to Nicodemus, so wayward and vagrant is it. In typhoon, tornado, and hurricane it has given terrible example of its waywardness. So also has the sea. But he controls them. He is not only *in* life, but he controls life. He is not only among the forces of the world; he masters them. Men sometimes lose control of their little engines and bits of machinery, but he never loses his mastery. Let "little faith" build upon this great truth: He is in life. And he is here to hearken, to answer, to control.

Surely here also is a lesson of personal purity. We turn from the story of the demoniac with the complacent thought that here at least is where no personal application is needed. But is there not? Our books on psychology are telling us how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; along what mental precipices we daily walk and what spiritual chasms of mysterious depths are near to us. There is an everyday danger that temper, passion, evil thinking may get control of us so that we lose steadiness and vision and poise and fall into black and noisome depths. Not only so fearfully and so wonderfully, but so delicately are we made, that the high tension under which we live may at any moment bring a moral breakdown. And therefore by faith and love and communion we need to keep ourselves constantly in the presence of the Master, sitting at his feet, sane and clothed in garments of purity. We need to keep him before us so that in his light we may see light, and in his powers of peace we may have constant poise and self-control.

Let us think of him, then, as the Master, and his gospel, the power of God unto salvation. I remember

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reading this bit out of Wesley's Journal, descriptive of a visit he made to the jail in London: "This morning I proclaimed free salvation to four condemned felons at Newgate." And then of the afternoon's work he said, "I preached redeeming grace to all whom I met in Aldersgate Street." Here is where his Mastership leads: free salvation and redeeming grace. Winds of temptation may beat and buffet; waves of sin may come with earthquake force; Satan may hold possession of the soul. But when the Master speaks the word, in a moment come peace, saneness, and garments of purity. It is salvation from forces which beat and submerge like wind and wave; it is redemption from usurpation of mind and soul. Surely this is free salvation and redeeming grace. And we have the right to appropriate these blessings with the outstretched hands of faith, and to proclaim them with the loving insistence of experience, for we have learned to know and own him as our Master. Yea, more. Because he is the Master, and we his followers joined to him by faith, of us it may be true, even as he said, "Ye shall receive power."

## LESSON FOR MARCH 20

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### A PARALYTIC FORGIVEN AND HEALED

GOLDEN TEXT: "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."—Matt. 9. 6.

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WHAT is the meaning of the title "Son of man"? In the face of the recent attempts to get rid of the expression either as one impossible to use in the Aramaic tongue, which was the native language of Palestine, or as meaning simply man, a human being, it is certainly worth while to look at the matter a moment. As to the first statement, it may be said there are few expressions more thoroughly imbedded in the Gospels, and which therefore rest upon undisputed oral tradition, than this, namely, "Son of man." Nor are Aramaic scholars agreed that it is impossible in that tongue. As to the second point, that it means simply a man, it would be meaningless and insufferably flat for Jesus to be always calling himself a man. No one doubted that he was a man, and for one who spoke with the propriety, strength, and freshness of Jesus it would have been impossible to be guilty of ever-recurring solecisms and inanities. We must therefore believe that Jesus not only used the title, but that it had a fitting and worthy meaning. What was that meaning?

All agree that it refers to Christ's humanity. But how, why? (1) It is the expression of the incarnation. What would be insanity in an ordinary man is natural in Jesus who came forth from God. (2) At the same time it is the expression of the actual humanness of Jesus, a fact which ought ever to have pre-

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vanted that humanness being swallowed up by his divineness. It was left to the nineteenth century to discover what ought never to have been lost, and would never have been lost, if the term "Son of man" had been kept in mind, namely, the man Jesus. We get, then, the twofold significance of Jesus in this phrase: it asserts his humanity and implies his divinity. (3) It is the expression of the humiliation, lowness of Jesus, who is to suffer and to die. He, the Lord and Master, the Ruler and King, the Messiah and Son of God, is yet the lowly One, who endures grief and tastes the bitterness of death.

It is the blessings which Jesus mediates to man which are in his mind when he uses the title "Son of man," and not simply his Messiahship from the standpoint of the Jews, or his relation to the Jews. "Never," says Zahn, "did Jesus call himself Son of man where it had to do with his special calling to the Jews, but rather where it had to do with his significance for the whole world and for mankind, therefore generally where he speaks of his Parousia (second coming); for then it will appear that the Israelite Jesus is not only the Redeemer and Messiah of Israel, but also the true man, to whom is due the lordship of the world, and that he is that member of the human race in whom the history of the race closes (Matt. 16. 27; 24. 30; 25. 31). And from this point of view we easily see how the expression hitches on to Dan. 7. 13. It is not because Jesus recognized himself as the Messiah promised there that he calls himself the Son of man, but because he knew himself as the Son of man he felt justified to appropriate to himself what is there said of the final rule of God and his congregation (or church) under the picture of the figure of a man as opposed to the figure of an animal of the world-empire. . . . Every great thing which in the Old Testament was said and promised of man in his relation to God or the world Jesus took to himself, and he dared do this

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because no outer or inner experience gave the lie to his self-consciousness of this. But in his intercourse with men he always found out more and more that not every man, only the true man, possessed the power and honor which God destined for man. As he found this man not among other men but only in himself, he became from *a son of man* *the Son of man.*"<sup>1</sup>

So much for the words "*the Son of man.*" Now what about this person declaring the sins of the paralytic forgiven and thus laying himself open to the charge of blasphemy? The sins I commit against my neighbor he can of course forgive (Matt. 18. 21, 22), but those sins in their Godward aspect and every sin in general can no man forgive, but only He against whom they are committed, namely, God. See Exod. 34. 6, 7; Isa. 43. 25; 44. 22. Jesus does not say that the charge of blasphemy is not a fair one. He was as jealous for the honor of God as his accusers. And it was because he was thus jealous, because he knew himself the Son of God as well as the Son of man, and the Son of God even *because* he was the Son of man, ordained from eternity as the prototype of humanity, the firstborn of many brethren (Rom. 9. 29), that he forgave sin.

There is something wonderfully touching about this story. The friends of the paralytic feel that if only they can get him in the presence of Jesus he will be healed. On account of the crowd they cannot carry him through the doors. So they somehow bring or hoist him up to the top of the low flat dwelling, break up the roof, and let him down on his pallet before Jesus. Then Jesus says, "Child, thy sins are forgiven." Ah, I thought he wanted healing of body. No, not chiefly. Heart sickness is worse; weakness of will

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<sup>1</sup> Zahn, Das Evangelium des Matthäus ausgelegt (Leipz., 1903), 353-355. See his long discussion, pp. 347-357, and compare Dalman, The Words of Jesus, i., tr. Kay (Edinb., 1902), 234-267; W. C. Allen, Int. Crit. Com. on Matthew (N. Y. and Edinb., 1907), lxxi-lxxvii, and the literature there referred to. See also the excellent remarks of Stanton, Jewish and Christian Messiah (Edinb., 1886), 239-250, and the additional note of Westcott on John 1. 51.

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and a stained soul are worse than weakness of body and unresponsive nerves. Jesus saw that the man felt so. Doubtless his paralysis was the result of his sin. At any rate, it was a common saying among the Jews, "There is no sick man healed until all his sins have been forgiven him." Christian Science goes back straight to the old Jewish rabbis. First get yourself right before God, conform your inner life to his will, to his purity, to his soundness, and then shall come health of body. Of course, the metaphysics of Christian Science has another origin, but so far as its claim that healing of body must come after the attitude of the soul has become truly and firmly fixed toward God, it reminds one of the method of the Jews, of Christ, and of early Christians (James 5. 14, 15). Understand, I speak only of this one thing, for Christian Science's philosophy of sin, sickness, and death, its whole rationale of life, is a monstrous error.

So Christ speaks to the man's deeper longing, "Child, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven." The man had been wondering how he could get rid of that burden upon his conscience, and so the first word Christ speaks is to that sorrow. We hear much nowadays about Christ's method of philanthropy—first the body, then the soul; first food, then sermons; first a bath, then a book; first clean lodgings, then a clean life. Now, I sympathize with that method, and there is a sense in which it is indispensable—first that which is natural and afterward that which is spiritual. You can't get virtue in swarming tenements. But do you get it in the homes of the rich? And this leads me to say that, looking deeply, that was *not* Christ's method. "My child, thy sins are forgiven." "Go ye into all the world, and"—build hospitals and model tenements and close drinking saloons and gambling dens?—no, "preach the gospel." Of course, it will not stop there, but if men really get hold of Christ's gospel they will do something else besides singing and praying. They

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will not stop at getting rid of a vicious heart; but they will proceed to getting rid of vicious social institutions. And in the measure of their religious regeneration will lie the measure of their moral-social enthusiasm. But the method of Christ is, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," then, "Take up thy bed and walk." For this reason a great religious movement like Puritanism, Pietism, Methodism, did far more for even moral reform than distinctly reform movements.

But what about repentance and faith? Did Christ forgive the paralytic without these? By no means. Such forgiveness would have been ineffective from the start; it would have been both valueless and foolish. Christ saw that the man had these, at least the beginnings, the earnest, and so he could freely forgive and thus bring him to where his healing would be beneficial.

Does the forgiveness of sins by Christ really imply that he is divine, as the scribes objected, that he is the Son of God, that to him the Father had committed the authority (*ἐξουσία*, not power; of course he had power, but the word is stronger, authority) on earth to forgive sins? Thus it seems to me. The scribes were right. The first Christians felt so, for they never arrogated this authority. Neither Peter nor Paul stood before the sick or well and said, "Thy sins are forgiven." The apostles went everywhere preaching, but not forgiving, testifying, but not absolving, sometimes breaking bread, sometimes—apparently not often—baptizing (1 Cor. 1. 15, 16), but never hearing confessions and pronouncing forgiveness. By and by, with the growth of priestly pretension and priestly ideas, absolution came in and was soon built up into a regular institution, and finally became a source of corruption so great that Europe could stand the shame no longer. To forgive sins in any deep view is the work of God—send the sinner to him. The priestly forgivers who sit there in their stalls, or who from chancel or pulpit or at bedside pronounce remission, are out of

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place—they are between the soul and God. Shove them aside, and let the sweet mercy of God beam upon me directly from out the eyes of Christ. Even those who lean upon the official absolvers feel in their higher moments that that great hymn which has sunk deep into the heart of universal Christendom expresses their desire:

Jesus, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to thy bosom fly.

“Of all under heaven,” cries the holy monk, “there is none that can comfort me but thou, O Lord, my God, the heavenly Physician of souls.”<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, there is a profound truth in the thought which Frederick W. Robertson brought home to English society, that, inasmuch as it is as the Son of man that Christ forgives sin and exercises judgment (John 5. 27), so every man and woman so far as he or she is in Christ can and must do the same, as well as the Christian community.<sup>2</sup> “Society absolves those whom God has not absolved—the proud, the selfish, the strong, the seducer; society refuses return and acceptance to the seduced, the frail, the sad penitent whom God has accepted.” “God has given to man the power to absolve his brother, and so restore him to himself. The forgiveness of man is an echo, an earnest of God’s forgiveness. He whom society has restored realizes the possibility of restoration to God’s favor. Even the mercifulness of one good man sounds like a voice of pardon from heaven, just as the power and exclusion of men sound like the knell of hopelessness, and do actually bind the sin upon the soul.” Pass on, then, the forgiving love of our Christ to your sinful fellows, O ye Christian men and women, and say to those who look to you for help, so far as you can say it, “Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven.”

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (1441), iii, 50.

<sup>2</sup> See “Restoration of the Erring,” sermon x, series ii, and “Absolution,” sermon v, series iii.

## LESSON FOR MARCH 27

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### THE EMPTY TOMB

GOLDEN TEXT: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."—Rev. 1. 18.

BY DAVID G. DOWNEY, D.D.

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CHRISTIANITY is the spring and source of human gladness. The most joyous seasons of the year are in connection with the jubilees of the Christian faith. Christmas, that cheers and gladdens the dying year, that renders bright and sunny the drear midwinter days! Easter, that comes with the new springing life of the earth, bringing with it suggestions not merely of physical and material but also of spiritual and eternal resurrection! What seasons of hope and joy and high cheer they usher in! The thoughtful inquirer will naturally ask, What does all this mean? Is there genuine cause for this joy? Is there an objective reality corresponding to all this subjective song? Is there a reasonable basis for our praise, our gladness, and our hope? Just what is it that we are rejoicing about; this future life of which we speak and sing and pray, of what sort is it? No question can be more profound than this; no answer more important.

Every now and then we read in meditative books the sayings of the mystics concerning heaven and the future state. In their prayers we come to a realization of their passionate breathings after peace and rest, and in their hymns we catch the cadence of their heart-beats after "that sweet and blessed country, the home of God's elect." Often we fancy that such yearnings and aspirings are the experiences only of the cloistered and saintly ones of earth.

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In truth, everyone who is at all thoughtful and considerate has some such moments of yearning inquisitiveness; some time when, if he could, he would rend the veil and have sight of the far beyond; quiet evening hours in which he strains the ear for a message from the distant country; mornings when he goes forth heart-hungry with a longing for some word from that bourne whence no traveler has returned. John Watson truly writes: "One must be afflicted with spiritual stupidity or cursed by incurable frivolity who has never thought of that new state on which he may any day enter, nor speculated concerning its conditions." "God forgive me," said Charles Kingsley, facing death, "but I look forward to it with an intense and reverent curiosity."

Who of us has not felt some such concern—has not asked himself what it will be like, speculated upon its scenes, wondered about its occupations, or longed for its fellowships and intimacies?

For thee, O dear, dear country,  
Our eyes their vigils keep.

Believing as we do in the eternity of Jesus, we very naturally turn expectantly to him. Who so able as he to satisfy all our desires? He declares himself to have been in the beginning, to have come from God, and to be perfectly familiar with the state that so piques our curiosity and so quickens our desires. Certain events and experiences seem amply to justify these claims. Voices speak to him, angels minister to him, and a supernal glory whitens his garments and illumines his countenance. His fellowships seem frequently more with the heavenlies than with the earthlies. The whole tone and temper of his life bespeak him a being in touch with the spiritual. But withal we search in vain for anything like depiction or description. There is no gratifying our desire as to the specific location or the general make-up of the future state. He does not tell

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us what it looks like, what pictures we may hope to see or what voices we may expect to hear. After we have listened to all, the veil is still upon us. It may be that Jesus did not wish to draw attention from the important work of establishing his kingdom in the earth, or it may be that he understood the inability of man to appreciate anything he could tell. Whatever may have been the cause, certain it is that we look in vain for anything like a portrayal of the circumstantial and external aspects respecting the future.

While Jesus is silent concerning the circumstances, he is not so as regards the nature and character of the future state. One readily notes that Jesus's emphasis is always upon life. He is never interested in the ephemeral, always in the real; not much in forms, but very greatly in principles. The one supreme fact with him is life. God sent his Son that man might not perish. "I am come that ye might have life."

Another evident fact in his teachings is that life in time is transitory and probationary. And just because of these two elements he constantly urges care of time and right use of life. His most pathetic pleadings and most strenuous warnings are all based upon the idea that this life, dignified, worthy, and wealthy in its meaning, is nevertheless, so far as this world is concerned, a fleeting shadow.

A third characteristic of Jesus is the quiet, tacit, and continual assumption that this life is related to the life of the future. This underlies all his teaching. This explains brevity and probation. Life is brief here, but has eternal cycles beyond. There is probation here but with respect to the future. As Mr. Watson says: "According to the drift of Jesus's preaching, the whole spiritual content of this present life, its knowledge, skill, aspirations, character, will be carried over into the future, and life hereafter be the continuation of life here. In this state of things we settle its direction, in the next we shall see its perfection." The character-

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istics and capabilities of time are carried forward and made use of in eternity. The man faithful in the few and comparatively unimportant things of time is given an opportunity to exercise the same fidelity in larger ways. His training and practice here fit him for rulership yonder. Jesus certainly assumes and teaches the continuity of life. Longfellow's lines are only a paraphrase of that teaching:

There is no death! What seems so is transition;  
This life of mortal breath  
Is but a suburb of the life elysian  
Whose portal we call Death.

What is your conception of heaven? What will you do there? Let your child ask this—ask it of yourself. The conventional notion and answer would be, Sing, contemplate, offer praise. Certain figurative and illustrative expressions—robes, crowns, harps, and palms—have been taken too literally and have been over-emphasized in our singing and speaking. Rest, no care, no struggle, no work, no progress—just inert placidity and harmonious posturing. This was in the mind of Faber when he wrote:

Father of Jesus, love's reward!  
What rapture will it be,  
Prostrate before thy throne to lie,  
And gaze, and gaze on thee!

Does the conception satisfy you? Does it satisfy any healthy, full-blooded man or woman? Is it reasonable? Is it conceivable with rational thinking or harmonious with the notion of a rational God? I think not. Does it bring joy or enthusiasm to the average man? No. He simply shuts his eyes, grits his teeth, and goes because he must. Why, then, cherish it? Simply because it is hoary with years, because we have imbibed it through sermon, song, and prayer, and because tradition sometimes receives the sanctity of revelation. "It is surely a frivolous notion," says Isaac Taylor,

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"that the vast and intricate machinery of the universe and the profound scheme of God's government are now to reach a resting place, when nothing more shall remain to active spirits through an eternity but recollections of labor, anthems of praise, and inert repose."

The concept of the future foreshadowed in the Bible is very different from this. The first view we have of God is of energetic work. The angels are constantly portrayed as in active service. Paul's preaching declares the same truth—the truth of activity, service, and the employ of all one's powers and capacities. Thus all through the Bible forecast we catch glimpses of life, progress, and the continued utilization of every grace, gift, talent, or acquirement. This conception gives meaning, purpose, scope to ordinary and daily living. If the conventional view be true, what is the purpose of all present-day effort? But if we catch the true thought we see the worth of every effort. Each acquisition is a talent for eternal use. All the experiences of life on the earth, all the struggles, all the achievements, perhaps even the failures, fit us more perfectly for life in the heavenlies. Now the average man meets death not as the Stoic or fatalist, but in the spirit of one who fights and conquers, who works and wins, who realizes that the things of to-day have closest relation to the eternal to-morrow. He refuses to whimper or complain, rather he fares forth with a smile upon his face and a rebuke of all cowardice on his lips as he sings:

No, at noonday, in the bustle of man's worktime,  
Greet the unseen with a cheer;  
Bid him forward breast and back as either should be,  
"Strive and thrive," cry, "Speed, fight on, fare ever  
There as here!"

We spend no time in idle speculation as to the special use of gifts or powers, or as to precise forms of activity. Not knowing conditions and circumstances, we cannot know methods. Suffice it that every bit of

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capacity, every form of energy, will find ample scope and will move with unwearying wing.

Look forward, then, not to a future of listless idleness, nor of choral anthems or heavenly choirings. But let your mind and heart rejoice in conceiving a place and state where the infelicities of time will be banished, where each ability will find its opportunity and ample reward, where progress will be unfettered, where work will be congenial, where competition will end, where coöperation will rule, and where power will perpetually manifest itself in obedience to the law of love.

There life is—to wake not sleep,  
Rise and not rest, but press  
From earth's level where blindly creep  
Things perfected, more or less,  
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

Where, amid what strifes and storms,  
May wait the adventurous quest,  
Power is Love.

The essential in time is life! in heaven is life! Life means personal identity, fellowship, development, service. It presupposes activity, work, progress. How much, where exerted, what kind, how glorious? God knows, and we should be satisfied. Be thou faithful over a few things, and I will make thee ruler over many things, saith the Lord.

## LESSON FOR APRIL 1

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### THE POWER OF FAITH

GOLDEN TEXT: "All things are possible to him that believeth."—Mark 9. 23.

BY CHARLES R. BARNES, D.D.

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THE ever-moving panorama of human sin and need constantly appealed to the divine compassion of the Son of man. Now it is the sad lapse of an unfortunate woman, perhaps more sinned against than sinning; now the paralytic, whose sins were emphasized by their forgiveness before the healing of his body; now the earnest entreaty of the nobleman in behalf of a sick child; now the tears of a broken-hearted widow, following her only son to his tomb; now the lone woman of Samaria in need of truth; and now the multitude faint and hungry for food. The need of men and the loving helpfulness of God found a meeting place in Jesus, who "went about doing good." As the Son of man he sympathized and had compassion for their distress. As the Son of God his everlasting love brooded over them with gracious deeds of kindly ministry and help.

In this lesson, as elsewhere, we see that the miracles of Jesus were not forced upon men, but were performed in response to the appeals of the afflicted. Men must learn their need of Christ before they will come for aid. All coming to him is prompted by the feeling of want and desire. So also it is the result of faith. Approach implies trust and expectation. If nothing is wished, and wished supremely, no approach will be made. The intensity of desire is indicated by the earnestness in the coming. In all true coming to God

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two things are always present: a sense of need and expectation of good.

I. *A Sense of Need.* There is inherent in most of men a sense of self-ability which must be broken down before one will acknowledge his inefficiency. It is only then that he will appeal to another for aid. In each of the cases recorded in the passage under consideration we see the presence of evil, physical or moral, and a consciousness of personal weakness. The evil outmeasures capability to cope with it. Relief or victory must come from another.

Jairus has a beloved daughter at the point of death. He despairs of her life through the skill and tenderness of physician or nurse. In his extremity he appeals to Jesus. A great evil prompted his coming, a greater causes him to remain. For even while he presents his case word is brought that his daughter has died, and that he need not "trouble the Master." If the ruler needed divine help in sickness, how much more in the presence of death! The woman who came to Jesus had been ill as long as Jairus's daughter had lived. Personal pain and discomfort had been her portion, and her money had been spent. Seeking health from many physicians, "she had suffered many things" of them. In her extremity she came to Jesus for relief. Such is the experience of multitudes. Even when evil is recognized and deplored, pride suggests self-help or that of some other mortal; or human agents advertise easy and absolute cures. When all else fails, the soul applies to the Great Physician for healing.

So, too, the blind men were in sore distress. Shut out from many active employments and pleasures of life, their days were passed in dark and dreary isolation from their fellows. Doubtless they had tried many remedies, and found them only mockeries. Their last hope is expressed in their cry, "Thou son of David, have mercy on us."

Now there is brought to Jesus one afflicted with a

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physical ailment and mental disorder, "a dumb man possessed with a devil." It may be that he was unconscious of his malady, unable to express a wish for help. So others bring him to the great Healer. As a father's love prompted the ruler to act in behalf of his daughter, so the solicitude of this man's friends brought him to Jesus. Doubtless his case was very similar to the one mentioned in Mark (9. 17-27). Sympathizing with their incapacity, friends believed and acted for them. This spiritual service we owe to each other. "There are those for whose cure we must labor; whom we must bring to Christ by admonition, by threats, by authority, and, if need be, by wholesome compulsions" (Hall, *Meditations*). Blessed is he whose appreciation of another's distress and whose love gives him a tongue to speak in his behalf. Prayer includes not supplication only, but intercession also.

These and multitudes besides came to Jesus, so possessed with a desire for relief that they were willing to risk everything. Men might ridicule or threaten; assign false motives or irrational trust; or accuse them of presumption or impertinence, saying, "Why trouble ye the Master?" Such a deep sense of need, such an intense longing for help, had possessed them that they cared little or nothing for public opinion. The physical ill must be cured, the evil spirit cast out, the broken heart comforted, the memory relieved by the assurance of sins forgiven.

II. *Expectation of Good.* This expectation is the child of faith; a confidence in his love, power, and all-sufficiency. Where there is no expectation of good there can be no motive in coming. It was their confidence in the ability and willingness of Jesus to help them that prompted and supported men in approaching him. And their expectation of good at his hand was stronger than their fear of the evil they would be relieved of.

Jairus first approaches the Master in behalf of a

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child nigh unto death. His trust in Christ for her restoration to health was expressed in the words, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death: come and lay thy hands upon her, that she may be healed; and she shall live." When word is brought that his child is dead, his faith staggers not. It indited the bolder prayer, "My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live." Faith's intensity increases with the growing need for help.

Consider the woman with an issue of blood. How is her magnificent faith maintained against fearful odds! According to Jewish law she was unclean, and to be avoided; by no means to be touched. She was poor, having in search of health "spent all that she had." She recalled the many failures of the past: how instead of relieving her she "had suffered many things of many physicians." But all these things count for nothing as reasons for unbelief. Her faith seems to argue thus: "No matter if others might avoid me because of my uncleanness, this one will not; no matter if others demand a fee of me, this one freely gives; no matter how many physicians have failed to cure me, this man will be successful." So impressed was she with the ability and compassion of Jesus that she ascribed miraculous power even to his clothes. "For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole" (Mark 5. 28). Suiting the action to the word, she reached forth her hand and touched the fringe of his robe, and healing answered her faith. Our Lord assured her that faith was the means of her cleansing.

The prayer of the blind men was probed by the question, "Believe ye that I am able to do this?" Is their cry one of distress only; of distrust and despair, with no expectation of coming good? the wail and challenge of unbelief, that indirectly charges our Lord with inability? Or was it the prayer of faith, made musical by the note of glad expectancy?

There is no real coming to God but by the way of

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faith. Unbelief begets distrust. Distrust separates from God, closes the heart to his grace. Distrust displeases God, for it prevents his disposing to us of the riches of his grace. He ever waits to be gracious, and the trustful, receptive soul is a joy to the divine Giver.

The measure of one's trust in Christ is the measure of all the rest of his Christian character. One will have purity, love, wisdom, long-suffering, gentleness, any grace, as his faith is capable of taking up, and, so to speak, holding in solution. True faith is a coming to Jesus Christ to be saved and delivered from a sinful nature. "It is a faith of love, a faith of hunger, a faith of thirst, a faith of certainty and firm assurance, that in love and longing, and hunger and thirst and full assurance, will lay hold on Christ as its loving, assured, certain, and infallible Saviour and atonement. It is this faith that breaks off all the bars and chains of death and hell in the soul" (Law, Characters and Characteristics). It is to this faith that Christ always says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." He who thus seeks Christ must find him to be his salvation.

Faith also determines the amount of our power for service; for faith brings us into vital and living union with Him who is the only source of spiritual power (*δύναμις*). Thus witnesses the apostle Paul: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4. 13).

III. "*All things are possible to him that believeth*" (Mark 9. 23). The Golden Text is part of the answer given by Jesus to the father of the child possessed of a dumb spirit. After telling of his son's sad condition he makes an appeal to Jesus in behalf of himself and the afflicted one: "If thou art able (Gr. *δύναμαι*), have compassion on us, and help us." The expression, "If thou art able," seems to imply somewhat of doubt in the man's mind as to the ability of Jesus. Our Lord replied, "If thou art able (Gr. *δύναμαι*) to believe, then

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all things are possible." It was not a question of the power of Jesus to cast out the dumb spirit, but rather of the father's ability to *believe*. When we come to God our faith should rise to an absolute, unquestioning trust. There should be no question as to his ability, though we should ever seek to know and submit to his will. It is not for us to decide what we wish, or what is good for us, and then charge God with granting our request. With such a spirit prayer ceases to be petition and becomes dictation.

Rendered literally, our Lord's declaration, "All things are possible to him that believeth," is, "All possible things (are) for the one believing." Dr. Bloomfield suggests the following rendering: "All possible things (may be done) for the believing one." All true prayer is made in submission to the divine will. What is the possible thing must in every case be decided by God, and to his decision true faith willingly submits. Here is no place for the wild and presumptuous vagaries of some who render the passage literally, and who assume that whatever they may wish becomes through their desire a *possible* thing. One may ask that which it would be impossible for God in love and justice to grant. God does not always answer our prayer by granting any special petition. Faith can never go further than the clear promises of God. His word must go before our faith. God promised to Abraham and Sarah a son at the time of life when such an event seemed an impossibility. But Abraham "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform" (Rom. 4. 20, 21). Human reason may declare a thing to be "impossible," but if God has promised it, then faith accepts it as not only probable but certain. Trust Him to whom we owe all our blessings. We cannot fathom his love or his wisdom, but we may trust in his ability to perform.

## LESSON FOR APRIL 10

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### THE MISSION OF THE TWELVE

GOLDEN TEXT: "Freely ye have received freely give."—Matt. 10. 8.

#### THE MEASURE, METHOD, AND MANNER OF THE DISCIPLES' GIVING

BY EDWIN L. EARP, PH.D.

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THESE golden words are taken out of the most interesting chapters in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ to the modern social worker in the kingdom of God—his tour of the cities, his impression of their condition, his upbraiding of the system that had made them such, and ending with his matchless invitation to the victims of the system in the closing verses of the eleventh chapter.

We get a view of the people in the cities as Jesus saw them, "distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd," and begin to see the meaning of the text; for these disciples were sent on a special mission "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," who needed not only the message of good tidings of the kingdom which was at hand, but also real help, "first aid," for they were sick, dead, diseased, leprous, and insane.

Thus they were to give a demonstration of how it would be when the kingdom of heaven was really established in these cities, and the people would be living normally, as they were to be only for a brief period under their ministry. It was after his contact with these pressing problems of the cities that he said unto his disciples, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his

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harvest." Between this interview and the next chapter, which records the call to his disciples to go on this important mission, there seems to have been a season of prayer, possibly one of those occasions when apart from his disciples he prayed all night, for the next chapter opens with the record of the call, the gift of power, and the advice as to method: "And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness." And having told them to whom to go he further said, "And as ye go, *preach*, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." But they were to do more than preach, they were to "heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons."

But we are not to infer that the kingdom of God consisted merely in doing these things; this is only a part of the process by which the kingdom of God is to be established in the cities. In the kingdom of God there are to be no lost sheep, no miserable victims of the system or of sin, because the principles of the gospel he brings to men shall be acted upon by all. There may be sickness and distress, but they will not be left as sheep without a shepherd; there will be some one to care for them, some institution to look after the welfare of the helpless. Until the cities and villages have heeded the preaching of the disciples of Jesus they will still need the charity of the disciples.

Now, the class of people to whom the disciples were sent could not afford to pay for the benefits received, nor were they in need of money, for Jesus knew that "relief in kind" was the best principle for his disciples to act upon, so he says unto them (for we must remember that Judas Iscariot was among them), "Freely ye received, freely give. Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff; for the laborer is worthy of his food." This is not, therefore, a proof

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text for *paid service*, as the old translation "hire" would lead us to believe, but rather a text descriptive of the measure, the method, and the manner of the service the Christian disciples are to render at the command of their Lord and Master to a special class of those who need ministering unto most.

I. *The Measure of Their Giving.* As they had received, Jesus had given them authority ample to execute the work wherever it was necessary. Jesus never asks us to give what we have not, but we surely are expected to give what we have; and we notice in this case that it was power, authority, he had given them, and it was this they were to exercise in dealing with the people to whom they were sent. Money, clothes, medicine, etc., were the things Jesus told them not to take, not even food, for these are incidentals as compared with the greater task. So in the unclean world, with the teeming masses who crowd our cities and villages, shepherdless, these things are only incidental to the problem of authority and teaching that shall get at the roots of the evils and make our cities normal places for the habitation and intercourse of men.

Of course, in our day we need money, medicine, physicians skilled in their art and with scientific precision in treatment of cases; we need the preaching and teaching that involve salaries, buildings, and endowments, but even here the measure of our giving is as we have received, and the great aim is to get all people to live right, so that we may have the least possible residuum of the defective social output in pauperism, defectiveness, and crime.

In some measure God has given us all power or authority to do something that will make the world better if we exercise our gifts in service for others. The reason many disciples never get the call to the fields of service is because they have not learned the lesson of giving, and they are therefore without spiritual re-

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sources. The measure of the disciple's giving should be, therefore, the measure of God's endowment of him.

II. *The Method of Giving.* We have very little if any information as to how these disciples performed their works of healing, but we are safe in assuming that they followed the methods of Jesus, which they had observed on their journey with him through the cities and villages. They were the methods known to them in their day. In our day we believe in any method that is efficient in relief of human suffering and poverty; and we place confidence in such methods because we believe God is in his world, and is the author of every good and perfect gift. Hence we send out our medical missionaries to the great cities of the heathen world to heal their sick, and blind, and crippled, and even their leprosy can be assuaged, and we trust ultimately cured. We organize our charities in the cities of the home-land and believe they represent the gospel of the kingdom; so with every agency of the modern socialized church.

In the category Jesus gave we have a suggestion of method. Each case must be treated according to the diagnosis, so for each class of diseases. In modern philanthropy the wise charity worker gives no relief without first investigating the case, unless it be so self-evident that no investigation is necessary.

But we notice the disciples were told to "preach" as they went, and to "heal the sick," etc. Our modern philanthropy and charity must not omit the dynamic element of the gospel message in all its noble work of relief and healing. And the preaching was not alone for the poor, wretched victims of the social struggle of Jesus's day, but in his tour of the cities he pronounced *woes* upon the scribes and Pharisees, and upon their lawyers, who prevented justice and laid burdens upon the people grievous to be borne, and they even robbed widows' houses; but he also preached to those who were burdened, saying, "Come unto me, all ye

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that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." He taught them how to find rest in labor by learning his way to carry burdens. He taught them soul rest.

So the modern disciple must not only give help to the needy, but, as he gives, must preach and teach that these ills may be prevented permanently from burdening society.

III. *The Manner of Giving.* Give freely without expecting a reward from the needy, but trusting in the bounty of the all-seeing God, who will not let even the cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple lose its reward. It was to be, therefore, a *free service*; like the Son of man himself, they were to serve as one who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.

They were not to be always well received, hence they were to "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." Their service must be wise and harmless. They must know how to behave when brought before councils and put to debate as to their mission and authority. When scourged and ill-treated they were to receive it without revenge.

It must be fearless service—"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." From some of their teachings would result divisions and contentions. "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." The modern disciple needs this strong doctrine of fearlessness in his ministry to speak the truth though it may temporarily bring division, for it is the Master's way to permanent peace.

Jesus was ever kind and gentle as a nurse to the suffering and oppressed, but he pronounced woes upon the oppressors and drove with indignation the "graft-

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ers" from the temple of his Father. So in our task in the modern cities: we must be gentle and kind in our treatment of the poor and unfortunate oppressed, but we must be strong in denouncing and in correcting wrongs of society, and the wickedness of evil men who live by oppression of others.

What meaning, then, has this Golden Text for us? Is the Master making a tour of the cities and villages of our day? Has he not called us to prayer for laborers in his harvest as we see with him the people scattered as sheep without a shepherd? Are there sick who need help? Are there premature deaths that ought to be prevented? Are there lepers to be cleansed, demons to be cast out of men? Then let us hear his voice as he sends us, his chosen ones, with authority to do the works that he did, "and even greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto the Father." What shall be the measure of our service? The measure of the gifts he has bestowed upon us of wisdom, and strength, and salvation for the race; good government, and a broad, brotherly human sympathy. What shall be the method of our service? Going about doing good in Jesus's way, to be revealed for our time as it was for the twelve, giving what is needful and helpful, but preaching the message that will make society what it ought to be, regenerating environment as well as purifying the sources of life, destroying the roots of evil as well as treating the victims of the system. What shall be the manner of our service? Simple, wise, harmless, brave, fearless, Christlike. And when we have rendered up such service in his name to the least of these who need him we shall be rewarded with a share of his glory in the city of God.

## LESSON FOR APRIL 17

### THE QUESTION OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

GOLDEN TEXT: "But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."—John 5. 36 (R. V.).

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OUR Saviour repeatedly pointed to his works as evidence that he was the Messiah of God, and the world's Redeemer. He says, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14. 11). Again he says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 15. 24). Believing is as much a matter of attitude as of evidence. The evidence was all-sufficient, "They have seen"; but the attitude was fatally wrong, "They have hated." Here is a great truth which Christ set forth again and again, and which we need to consider. Again he said, "The works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep" (John 10. 25, 26). He says, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father" (John 10. 37, 38). When John the Baptist sent messengers with the question, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" Jesus answered and said unto them, "Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor

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have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (Matt. 11. 4-6).

And as we read the Gospels we find his works producing the very effects that these declarations would lead us to expect. For instance, you will remember a storm on Galilee; a little boat tossed by the waves, and on the boat Jesus and his disciples. The disciples were filled with fear when the waves broke over the little boat, but Jesus was asleep. They woke him, saying, "Save, Lord; we perish." And he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. And the men marveled, saying, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matt. 8. 25, 27.)

Once he was preaching the truths of the kingdom. The works that he was then doing were not miracles of physical healing, but the making of new revelations of God, attested by the hearts of his hearers, and these constituted such witness of his divine mission that officers who had been sent to take him came away, saying, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7. 46).

In Bethany he stood beside the grave of Lazarus. He had already spoken in divine wisdom, and comforted with divine sympathy, and now he commanded the dead to come forth. The grave yielded its prey. Lazarus lived. Christ had conquered death. "Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him" (John 11. 45).

You will remember the words of the centurion at the cross. This man had seen the divineness of Christ's dying, and although he may not have understood all, he saw enough of the mighty work which Christ was doing on the cross to lead him to cry out, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

But the works which the Father gave Christ to accomplish, viewed in another way, constitute a witness vastly greater than the testimony of John the Baptist,

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and greater than any single miracle ever wrought. The whole work of his life was a realization of God's plan for the salvation of the world, a plan which he had made known in ever-brightening revelations of the Old Testament Scriptures. In this very chapter (verse 46) Jesus says, "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me." God spoke, of old time, to the fathers by the prophets in many fragments and in many fashions; and the prophetic expectations grew ever brighter and richer as that far-off divine event toward which all creation was moving drew near. And these prophetic expectations always centered around the coming Messiah. At length in the fullness of time he came; and the prophecies seemingly hopelessly divergent met and harmonized in him. Now it is seen that the prophecies that he is to be the Son of God and that he is to be of David's line are not contradictory; that he can be Conqueror, Deliverer, and Shepherd of his people, and yet be a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, whose sufferings atone for sin. The work which the Father gave Christ to do in the salvation of the world was vastly greater than any single miracle; it was the accomplishment of age-long plans.

Moses had said, "Jehovah thy God shall raise up unto thee a prophet like unto me" (Deut. 18. 15). And a part of the content of the Messianic hope had been that the Messiah should be God's prophet. Now, the prophet's office was not primarily to *foretell* events—it was to do that sometimes—but it was chiefly to *tell forth* the mind of God. He was God's spokesman; and so when Aaron was to be Moses' spokesman he was called his prophet (Exod. 7. 1). So then the Messiah, when he came, was to be a prophet telling forth the mind of God. But the realization far surpassed the expectation. He did not destroy the law and prophets, but lifted the teaching of them up into perfect expressions of the will of God. He gave the world a perfect standard for righteous human con-

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duct. He brought life and immortality to light. He gave the world its one perfect example of life in holiness. He proclaimed the mind and plan of God in glory of which the world had never dreamed. So perfectly did he reveal God to the world that he could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14. 9); and another said, "The effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance" (Heb. 1. 3). If we think of a prophet as one who tells forth the mind of God, whether it refer to the past, present, or future, surely the world's greatest prophet is the Prophet of Galilee.

Another part of the prophetic hope that God had given Israel was that the Messiah should be God's king. The founding of the kingdom of God in the world was one of the ruling ideas of the prophet. But here, again, realization far surpassed expectations. Christ founded a spiritual kingdom, world-wide and age-long. His program is peace; his weapons are truth; his scepter is love; his throne is a cross, and from that throne he rules the ages.

Another element of the prophetic hope was that the Messiah should be God's priest. And during the silent centuries after the voice of prophecy had ceased, men meditated upon the revelations that had been made and came to see the unapproachable holiness of God. And every new appreciation of God's holiness gave a new realization of man's sinfulness, and a new longing for the appearing of the Servant of God who should be both priest and victim, and bridge the widening gulf between the holy God and sinful man.

The Messiah came as the world's High Priest, the one Mediator between God and man. He revealed a wealth of love in the heart of God that the world had never known, and the hearts of men were strangely drawn heavenward. He lived his life, and made atonement for the world by his death. The fountain was open for sin and uncleanness. Guilty man was

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redeemed and lifted up into the immortal fellowship of the sons of God. The works which the Father gave him to accomplish bear witness of him that the Father sent him.

Then we turn to the works which the Father hath given Christ to accomplish since the days of his flesh. Here, again, one despairs of doing more than to suggest a few of many very great truths.

*He has hallowed all of life.* There is much of life that is commonplace, and the world is slow to believe that religion has anything to do with it. Religion was long conceived of as something ascetic and austere and rigid and lofty. Christ taught us to enjoy life in God's beautiful world. He preached of the birds of the air, and of the lilies of the field, and of the setting sun, and of little children, and of the farmer sowing his seed, and of the shepherd looking for the lost sheep. He ate with publicans and sinners; he shared the joys of the wedding feast, and gave the best wine ever tasted. And when he attended a banquet it was made a text to point men to the feasts that await us in our Father's house.

*He has hallowed all lives.* Social barriers and racial barriers are broken down in the new human brotherhood established by him. He breathed forth his golden rule of life, and human slavery was doomed. Wherever his gospel has been received he has broken the shackles of the bondman. When he came in the flesh the institution of slavery was universal; now it exists in no land where his gospel has been received.

When he came woman's position in human society was but little better than slavery, and such conditions exist to-day in every land where his gospel has not gone. But he has lifted woman up to her rightful place at man's side as the queen of the home, and this he has done for the women of every nation where his gospel has been received.

When he came there were in all the world no free

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schools or hospitals or libraries, no asylums for the blind or the deaf or the insane; there were no charities for helping the aged or destitute or for preventing cruelty to children or to animals. These things and a thousand more of the same kind have sprung up wherever his gospel has gone. They are the fruit of Christian civilization. They have been built by hands that bear nail scars.

*Jesus has revolutionized the world's standard of greatness.* It is no longer he who holds most of his fellow men in terror who is great, nor he who makes most of his fellow men serve him. Slowly the world is coming to Christ's standard, and the heroes now are not those who destroy but those who save life; and he is greatest of all who makes himself a servant of all.

*Jesus has captivated the geniuses of the ages.* The sweetest music of the world is that inspired by him. The greatest paintings of the world are those made to honor him. The greatest statesmen of the world are men who have sought to bring civil government to his ideals. The greatest authors of the world have exhausted their genius in weaving laurels for his thorn-marked brow.

*He has sweetened the life of the world.* He has softened the heart of the world and made it tender to every cry of distress, even if that cry come from stricken Messina or from far-off famine-smitten villages in India or China.

Jean Paul Richter says that Christ, the "holiest among the mighty and the mightiest among the holy, lifted with his pierced hand empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages."

## LESSON FOR APRIL 24

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### WARNING AND INVITATION

GOLDEN TEXT: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—Matt. 11. 28.

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THIS familiar and wondrous music is commonly remembered in detachment. In our lesson we hear the mighty chords that resolved themselves into it; the tender invitation speaks with the persuasion of victory. For the rest that Christ gives is, first of all, the shadow of his strength. His is no fluttering concern, no unnerved sympathy. Knowing the worst he pledges the best. He is that man of the seer's announcement who should be "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

As the mighty rock, planted immovably, withstands the desert wind and the drift of desolating sand until soil and verdure and fruitage have gathered at its base, so the man Christ Jesus, rooted in the Eternal Will, stands in the midst of our life, resisting the fatal drift of human waywardness, bearing upon his perfect obedience the strain of the pride and folly of a race, until in the shelter of his impregnable truth there has arisen a new order of righteousness and peace.

At the time of our lesson this independent strength of Jesus stands forth in peculiar majesty. It is an hour of crisis and defeat. There has come at last the inevitable rupture between a people who would make him a king to fulfill their will and One who would make them subjects to fulfill the will of God. The shield of his early popularity, thus far extended between him and the murderous envy of the rulers, has fallen. The cross

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throws its clear shadow across his path. He leaves Galilee to die.

From Peræa he looks back upon his ministry in those cities upon which he has lavished his light and love. To the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, he has given himself as to no others—and the end is rejection; there remains not one among them longer to say, “Thou art the Christ.” Indeed, even the intrepid John the Baptist, languishing in the dungeons of Machærus, is cast down by the weary delay in the redemption of Israel and sends to know whether his hopes should be transferred to another yet to come. The lifework of Jesus lies in apparent ruin. Deserted and distrusted, with heavy heart he takes up the burden of woe against those favored but obdurate cities of Galilee; their rejected privilege must mean their heavier doom in that judgment day toward which they are blindly hastening.

But listen! “At that time Jesus answered.” Answered what? Answered the total situation—all its darkness and doubt, its misgivings and desertion and defeat. He had still the master-word. There is nothing more kingly than the answers of Jesus throughout his ministry; for sheer play of intellect they are matchless; for moral vision they are sublime. He was never discomfited; his flank was never turned; he had always the sufficing answer. And judging by the unfolding testimony of the centuries, his is to be the last word indeed; his the ultimate and abiding standard whereby the worth of man’s life shall be tested in the great assize. He who sides with Jesus Christ, whatever the fortunes of the hour, sides with final victory and peace.

“Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father.” The word holds more than gratitude; it means hearty assent and espousal of the Father’s will; unreserved adoption of the divine program. And what was that program, ordained by the Lord of heaven and earth? “I thank thee, because thou hast hid these things from

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the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Saint Luke records that "in that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit"; he exulted in the laws of the spiritual kingdom. Though he sorrowed that man in pride and obstinacy should refuse to enter the kingdom of God, he rejoiced with exceeding joy that no condition of philosophic wisdom or shrewd, calculating prudence could bar the humblest mind. The way was ever open to the childlike heart. How beautiful, how just, how inevitable! It is both fair and necessary that the treasures of the spirit should open, and open only, to that humility and trust which are possible to every child of man and without which the relation of the child to the All Father is so strained and false as to prohibit the sweet confidences of fellowship. Jesus saw that the only spiritual success lay in the winning of surrendered wills and docile hearts; all other achievement was delusive; all other following unreal and vanishing. He accepted the conditions. He would win men to the truth by an obedience even unto death. His momentary reverse was but an incident in a royal progress. All things were delivered unto him of his Father; the secret of the Lord was his to interpret to men; the keys of the abiding kingdom were in his hand.

And so it was out of this sublime victory, whereby the very prince of this world was judged, out of this triumphant peace, that Jesus offered rest to men. He was worthy who matched himself thus against the needs of a world. He draws and commands us by manifest authority; we feel him to be the incarnate will of God; centered in him, we find ourselves in our true and restful course. The burdens of doubt, of false desire, of inconsistent and distracting purpose, fall away. The divided self is united to fear the Name supreme, to seek the one thing needful; is knit into the integrity of that true self that comes with joy to do the Father's will and cries at last, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

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For in all his giving, Christ is ever giving himself; and his rest is nothing that can be received apart from him, or carried from his presence. It attends him as the shadow the rock. It is for those alone who come and learn and abide. "Come," is his promise, "and I will rest you." It is one word; no separate word for the gift intervenes between the Saviour and the soul. "I will rest you." In your childish griefs there was one who calmed you not so much by what she gave or did as by what she was; past all others, though they may have offered the same care, you ran crying until you found mother and, in her arms, your solace and rest.

This intimate comfort of the Christ leads us beyond the rest of strength to the rest of sympathy. As there is a weak sympathy, there is an unsympathetic strength equally incapable of imparting rest. Nothing so begets despair in the weak as heartless power. But in Christ the power of God stoops to lift us up. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Here is might that cares, that makes us feel its kinship, that becomes weakness by our side to win our trust and hearten us forever. The false religions of the world weigh like a nightmare upon the souls of men. Even in Palestine in Jesus's day, the preliminary revelation of the true religion had been so overlaid by human requirement as to become an intolerable burden. From this burden of religion, grievous to be borne, Jesus set men free by disclosing the heart of God. In his own devotion he bids us see the eternal love that seeks our love and loyalty. Trusting in a Christlike God, we may drop the burden of our past and future, we may be redeemed from the slavery of remorse and foreboding, we may look up from a free and grateful present into the face of the Father of mercies. In this faith Saul that is called Paul was given rest, and with measureless conviction came to echo his Saviour's pledge to men. "Be anxious for

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nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall sentinel your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But even Paul in his transcendent experience of the grace of Christ did not passively receive the fullness of rest. He had to lay hold upon this, as upon all else, for which he was laid hold upon by Christ Jesus. In this very passage he writes, "I have *learned* to be content." Graces must be learned as well as implanted; gifts must be practiced to be perfected; rest is in part an achievement. "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," is but half the promise. All that the strong and succoring presence of the Saviour of men can bestow is for us as by faith we enter the shadow of the Rock of Ages. He rests us from our doubt and guilt and anxious care, from double purpose and "the weight of chance desires"; he gives the peace of pardon and confidence. But he adds, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall *find* rest unto your souls." Rest is found as well as given. There is an art of rest, a peace by obedience.

Christ then rests us finally by his secret, as well as by his sympathy and his strength. This is the meaning of his yoke—a practical secret of rest; it is his method of taking life, of bearing the strain of the daily burden. Burden-bearers we all are and must remain; we are ordained to responsibility, and to bear it is our glory and our increasing strength. Those who would avoid it invite the nemesis that had fallen upon "that hard pagan world" when the Christian hope was born.

Deep weariness and sated lust  
Made human life a hell.

Ennui dogging the hours of unbridled self-indulgence, the arrears of care overtaking the careless with crushing weight before the end of the day, these are the

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judgments of Him who worketh hitherto and who calls us to a noble partnership in service.

Rest is not quitting  
The busy career;  
Rest is the fitting  
Of self to its sphere.

The only question for us is the question of adjustment to life's burden, and Christ whispers to us the secret; it lies, he declares, in the meek and lowly heart. He offers us his yoke not as a burden, but as a help in carrying the burden; it is the practiced spirit of humility, the habit of self-dedication to the will of God. This yoke of Christ makes the burden light by dividing it; it persistently refuses all but the load of God's appointment. The monstrous incubus of vanity and pretense, of covetousness and social envy and lust of power, under which a deluded world is staggering is escaped by the happy wearer of this magic yoke of meekness. And even farther is this restful law of elimination carried in the exercise of the right to forego rights, in the exclusion of the good that is the enemy of the best. And in bearing the ordained burden that remains, the yoke is "easy," "serviceable," for it enables us to bring to our simplified task powers divinely fitted. Day by day our freedom grows under the accepted and wonted discipline; it becomes the freedom of the artist; the freedom of forgotten toil; obedience turned to mastery; service that is joy and peace.

## LESSON FOR MAY 1

### TWO SABBATH INCIDENTS

GOLDEN TEXT: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice."—Matt. 12. 7.

#### THE ESSENCE OF TRUE RELIGION

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WHATEVER the origin of the institution of the Sabbath, its observance among the Hebrews was based upon humanitarian considerations: "Six days thou shalt do thy work," says the Book of the Covenant (Exod. 23. 12), "and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may have rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the sojourner, may be refreshed." But as we trace its history during Old Testament times we soon discover that these motives gradually receded into the background, while the day came to be looked upon more and more as a purely ceremonial institution, whose sanctity was carefully guarded by numerous restrictions and regulations. This tendency continued during the period between the close of the Old Testament canon and the opening of the Christian era. "By the Jewish legalists the Old Testament regulations respecting the Sabbath were developed and systematized to an extent which has made their rules on the subject a byword for extravagance and absurdity." Whatever some of the more spiritual leaders may have thought, the controlling passion of the Judaism of Jesus's day was the observance of the law; and since the great mass of Jews failed to make a clear distinction between the law embodied in the biblical writings and the traditional law that had grown from it, they considered that the setting aside of these rabbinical requirements consti-

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tuted as great a crime as the transgression of the law of Moses.

The antagonism of the Jews to Jesus was due, in a large measure, to his attitude toward the law. True, in the Sermon on the Mount, which embodies the constitution of the kingdom of God as conceived by him, he asserted: "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill." Apparently he was as anxious as they to fulfill the law. Why, then, the constant conflict? Why the oft-repeated accusation that he was breaking the law? The explanation is not far to seek. It is the old, yet ever new, conflict between form and substance, between the letter and the spirit. The Jews believed that the law found its fulfillment in the painstaking observance of the form; Jesus, on the other hand, was convinced that the form was not essential; that the essence of the law was its spirit, and that it found its true fulfillment in the common-sense application of this spirit to the ever-changing conditions of life.

In the first incident described in the lesson the disciples of Jesus had violated the traditional Sabbath law in two respects. They had plucked the ears of corn, but plucking was a species of reaping, which was forbidden in the rabbinical law. Before they could eat, they had to rub the ears (Luke 6. 1), so as to secure the kernels, but the rubbing was looked upon as a species of threshing, and therefore forbidden on the Sabbath. The cure performed by Jesus, recorded in the latter part of the lesson, was also, according to common Jewish notions, a violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath. True, in cases where life appeared to be endangered, help might be rendered, but in ailments where the question of life and death was not immediately involved no treatment was to be given on the Sabbath day. Jesus insists in both cases, which, according to Luke, occurred on two different occasions, that the Jewish attitude is wrong. There is some-

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thing more binding than the letter of the law, namely, the principle underlying all law, which is loving consideration for the welfare of all. This consideration led to the institution of the Sabbath; it justified the act of David, which was contrary to the letter of the law, and the labors of the priests, which were a violation of the Sabbath law, strictly interpreted. The spirit is more important than the letter, and at times the practice of the former may supersede the formal observance of the latter. Applying the principle to the cases in hand, the spirit of the Sabbath law permits the supplying of a personal need: to satisfy natural hunger is legitimate even on the Sabbath day. In the same way, the performing of works of kindness, as illustrated by the healing of the sick man, is in perfect accord with the spirit of the law.

Thus Jesus makes it plain that the Jews have a perverted idea of the divine requirements, and immediately he proceeds to set them right by summing up the essential demands of God in the words of the prophet, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." The utterance was intended primarily as a rebuke. Had they possessed the spirit of loving-kindness or mercy, they would have hesitated to condemn rashly and cruelly the disciples for satisfying a legitimate craving. At the same time it was meant to reëmphasize the principles of the religion Jesus came to proclaim. Evidently, in using the expression Jesus is not thinking exclusively of sacrifice and Sabbath observance as such, but rather of these as representing the externals of religion, while mercy denotes the essence. He contrasts the essence with the form and suggests their respective value in the sight of God.

The words of the Golden Text are a quotation from the book of Hosea (6. 6), where the Revised Version reads "goodness," in the margin "kindness," instead of "mercy." The New Testament writer uses the same word that is found in the Septuagint translation of the

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Hosea passage; hence we may assume that the two passages are meant to express practically the same ideas. At any rate, a study of Hosea's utterance will throw light on the words of Jesus. In the eighth century B. C. religion had come to be looked upon in Israel as largely a matter of ritual and ceremony. The great mass of people believed that all that Jehovah required of them was the painstaking observance of the external form. This, they thought, would entitle them to the divine favor and to God's protecting care against all harm. Such misconception led to a complete disregard of the ethical aspect of religion. The poor and the needy, the fatherless and the widow, were robbed and oppressed; kindness, justice, truthfulness, and other virtues were almost unknown. Against this perversion of the divine requirements the prophets thundered with all their might. They made it very clear that the most elaborate worship was but an insult to God when offered by those who had no mind to conform to his demands. Whatever differences may exist between the teaching of the several prophets, on this they all agree, that spirit and life are more essential than form.

This is what Hosea means when he cries out, "I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." Amos is equally outspoken: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and meal offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream." Isaiah expresses the same sentiments in 1. 11-17 and other passages; and Micah, in what has been called "the greatest verse in the Old Testament" (6. 8), calls attention to the essential elements of religion as con-

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ceived by the prophets: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" All the eighth-century prophets again and again emphasize the fact that whatever value forms may have as means to an end, they must never be considered ends in themselves.

The word translated "mercy" or "kindness" or "goodness" is used in the Old Testament to denote (1) the loving attitude of Jehovah to his people, (2) the loving attitude of the people toward Jehovah, and (3) man's loving attitude toward his fellows as a reflection of the divine love. The last is the most prominent idea in the Hosea passage, and the whole connection shows that it is preëminent in the thought of Jesus. In essence, then, Jesus says: Deeds of loving-kindness and mercy are more acceptable in the sight of God than the careful and painstaking observance of external forms of religion; and should it ever come to a choice between the two, the former must be held supreme. It would not be legitimate to draw from the words of Jesus the inference that he meant to abolish all religious forms, in this case the Sabbath. In his attitude on this point he was, like the ancient prophets, not an abolitionist but a reformer. He attacked and condemned the abuses of the form, and sought to place the emphasis where it belonged, on life and spirit. By restoring the Sabbath to its rightful place he showed himself the lord of the Sabbath.

Religious observances have their value, not as ends in themselves, or as the sole expressions of heart religion, but rather as means to an end. They may be of assistance for the preservation of the spiritual life, vehicles for the expression of gratitude and devotion, or channels through which the divine grace may reach the human heart and conscience. But they become a detriment and a hindrance as soon as they are assigned to first place, whenever they cease to be servants and

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are turned into masters. This is the truth Jesus sought to teach when he said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The two incidents recorded in the lesson, therefore, emphasize the eternal truth that a Godlike disposition and a Godlike attitude toward his fellows are the essential marks of a child of God, and not formal obedience to rules and regulations. The minute rules practiced in the days of Jesus had become exceedingly burdensome, but he by one stroke emancipated his contemporaries from the bondage of the letter that they might see the beauty and real significance of a truly religious life.

To sum up, the lesson narrative and the Golden Text suggest at least three permanent lessons: In the first place, religious observances can never be more than means to an end. When they are made an end in themselves, a substitute for weightier matters, they become an abomination in the estimate of God. Again, the proper expression of true religion is a life and conduct that reflect the character of God as revealed in Jesus the Christ. And finally, the basis of a truly Godlike life is an experimental knowledge of God and communion with him. Every age needs to be reminded of these truths. The danger of drifting into formalism is ever present; and it is an encouraging sign that the present generation emphasizes the practical aspect of religion. Nevertheless, this also is not without its dangers. "Love thy neighbor as thyself"—that is, live a life of loving service—is one law of the kingdom of God; but it is not, as some modern definitions of religion would seem to imply, the only law. Jesus joins with it, yea, places before it, the other, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Wherever all three truths are recognized and practiced, there the kingdom of God has come.

## LESSON FOR MAY 8

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### THE STING OF THE ADDER

GOLDEN TEXT: "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."—Prov. 23. 32.

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THESE words, quaint and picturesque, yet breathing, withal, the breath of tragedy, teach a philosophy that is no less practical than it is profound. It is not alone the terse and piquant phraseology that arrests and rivets attention, but the great truth it embodies. That truth is not obscure, it lies on the surface. It is this: the act of to-day becomes the fact of to-morrow. The present is related to the future as cause to effect. And it is apparent at a glance that the real significance of this fact is to be found in the phrase, "at the last." It is like a bell buoy which night and day, through calm and storm, serves both as sentinel and guide to the navigator, who without it is in danger of missing the channel and coming to grief on rock or shoal.

In its very nature this text is limited in its application to a single fact, the sin and folly and direful results of drunkenness. And while there are serpents and adders other than this evil that infest the path by mortals trod, yet this more than any and all others is fraught with peril and pain, with dishonor and death.

It will be seen from a cursory examination of the setting of this Golden Text that it is in the nature of a justification for certain advice given. In the verses immediately preceding the text we read, "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause?

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who hath redness of eyes?" The answer is direct and unequivocal: "They that tarry long at the wine; they who go to seek mixed wine." Then follow these words of wise and timely counsel: "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup," for "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Since, then, the trend of this truth has to do with the future, since the conduct is to be measured by its outcome, a glance ahead is in order. How does this road end? The answer to this question will have nothing to do with idle or curious speculations. The past is eloquent with instances in proof of the disasters following a life that passes under the thrall of appetite. The chamber of horrors connected with the results of such a life is not the creation of a fanatic's imagination, but an awful, crushing reality.

What is to be seen, then, in the future of those who tamper with this evil thing? What are the serpents and adders coiled along that path?

1. He who yields to his appetite for strong drink becomes the victim of an abject and pitiable slavery, for the most deplorable slavery imaginable is the slavery of a human will. So true is this that it sounds trite, yet human experience fails to furnish a form of bondage as debasing as that resulting from a human will crippled, inert, powerless. The personality of the victim is, Samsonlike, shorn of its strength. Lest this familiar characterization be regarded as extravagant, hear the pitiful lament of England's gentle humorist, Charles Lamb, brilliant, sweet-tempered, unselfish Charles Lamb: "The waters have gone over me, but out of the depths, could my voice be heard, I would cry out a warning to all who have set foot in this perilous flood. Could the youth to whom the flavor of the first wine is delicious at the opening scenes of his life, when he enters his newly discovered paradise, look into my desolation and be made to

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understand what a dreary thing it is when a man shall feel himself going down a precipice with open eyes and a passive will; to see his doom and have no power to avert it, yet to feel that it emanates from himself; to see all goodness empty out of him, and yet not be able to forget the time when it was otherwise; to bear about the piteous spectacle of his own ruin; could he see my feverish eye, feverish with last night's debauch, and feverishly looking for a repetition of that folly; could he but feel the body of death out of which I hourly cry with feeble outcry to be delivered, it were enough to make him dash the sparkling beverage to the earth with all the pride of its mantling temptation." Surely we hear in this dirge a mournful echo of the text, "at the last."

2. Another serpent waiting for its victim in this path is self-deception. Of all species of deception this is most to be dreaded, for we are our own worst enemy without knowing it. The sentinels of the soul are misled by the soul itself. They send out no warning note —what need? All is well! Pleasure crowns the board. Laughter leaps from lip to lip. Danger? There is none! The sky is bright with crimson and gold. The air is redolent of rarest perfume. Prosperity, happiness, peace crown the life. Dull care has fled, delight reigns supreme! Let others fear; let others stand on guard. As for these poor dupes, alas! they are hopelessly steeped in their self-deceit; there is more hope "for a fool" than for them.

A recent writer has quaintly said that the first degree in drunkard-making is the sheep degree. In the light of familiar experience how true this is, for caution, advice, and remonstrance are alike in vain with the candidates for this degree. They are neither children nor fools. They can stop when they want to. They are not weaklings! They know how far to go, and when to quit! They have no respect for the man who cannot put the brakes on his appetite. It is all

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a matter of well-regulated self-control. Temperance, not abstinence, is the safe and sane rule to follow. Poor deluded folks! the wool is over their eyes, they have taken the first degree, the rest is easy. They go the gait, and reach in time the common goal—drunkenness.

3. He who travels this path is doomed to make shipwreck of his dearest hopes and ambitions, for there is but one end to such a life, and that is *failure*. Now, worse things can happen than to fail, for failure has its bright side. But there is failure and failure. There is a failure that spells dishonor, disaster, disease, death. It is physical and moral bankruptcy in which no compromise with one's creditors is possible. The foundations are destroyed, the erection of another structure is impossible. The sun has set forever; it can never be followed by sunrise, for the sun itself is destroyed. The bite of the serpent, the sting of the adder, have made the ruin complete. These swiftly changing and somewhat mixed figures but faintly describe the kind of failure to which those are doomed who toy with this evil.

4. Then, too, dishonor lurks in this path. There is a very real sense in which defeat and failure may be honorable. Manhood remains undefiled, conscience is still unviolated, the life is not debauched with dishonor. But the hapless subject under consideration parts company with honor. The life he leads begets falsehood and deceit. He will lie without the quiver of an eyelid. He will call solemnly upon his Maker to witness to the truth of an utterly false statement. The finer distinctions of his moral nature have long since disappeared. He has but one thought, but one desire. His appetite, imperious, dominant, resistless, calls for gratification. Drink he must and will have, by any means, honorable or dishonorable. Indeed, to him these terms are largely meaningless. Craft, cunning, cruelty, that trinity of devils holds him in its grasp;

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he has long since ceased to think for himself. He is bound hand and foot by appetite. Honor! It has vanished even as a word, and as a virtue it is dead. Give him drink, you may take all else. Strong words these, does some one say? Yes, but not stronger than the truth, nay, not half so strong, for they are but a weak imitation of the horrid experience they affect to recount, they are a faint delineation of the actual experiences of thousands who have too late discovered that "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

5. And finally, what is perhaps the most pitiable of all, the slave of this evil thing feels when all is done the sting of remorse. The bite of the serpent is bad enough, but the adder's sting is the "sorrow's crown of sorrow in remembering better things." For while this slave of appetite is dishonored and self-deceived, and a physical and moral bankrupt, conscience is still alive, and while consciousness lasts he must feel the deadly sting, for "at the last it . . . stingeth like an adder." To cite instances in proof would be to burden these pages with a ghastly exhibit. From every profession and walk in life, from the ranks of the humblest to the palaces of kings, come the dismal echoes of these striking words, "at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

Should some thoughtless youth remind us that this is not the invariable result, that moderate drinking is possible, that excess in the gratification of the appetite is not the necessary concomitant of a moderate use of stimulants, it may be answered well within the facts that the margin is so narrow that it is nothing less than downright foolhardiness to take chances, when the chances are ten thousand to one against us. Let no one be beguiled by so insidious a tempter. Self-control is not a safeguard when one has taken "an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains." It is about time that we had learned that in the vast

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majority of cases indulgence in alcoholic stimulants makes self-control impossible.

What, then, in the presence of indisputable facts, is the only wise course to follow? There are a good many folks, with whom we count ourselves in perfect agreement, who are old-fashioned enough to believe that time has not found any safe substitute for the old rule, "Touch not, taste not, handle not" as a beverage spirituous and malt liquors. Call this a narrow fanaticism if you will. Adjudge it the creed of weak-minded, overtimid folk still in leading strings, what matters it? Better be weak-minded and in leading strings than the slave of an inflamed and merciless appetite that robs its deluded victims of self-respect, self-control, health, hope, and happiness. Better be old-fashioned than fooled by newer fashion. Better be a prude than a sot. Better be a coward than a fool. It is scarcely an evidence of unusual intelligence to thrust one's head into the lion's jaws just to show that one is free and independent, or that one is not afraid. Wholesome fear is an attribute of genuine courage. In the case under consideration fear is a sentinel whose warning one will do well to heed.

Meanwhile we will not lose sight of the picture the Golden Text for the day uncovers. It is a familiar picture, but none the less an appalling one. In it the dark lines predominate. Foreground and background are shrouded in blackness. Its sky is a belt of gloom. No sunrise illuminates its horizon. The stars of hope are swallowed up in impenetrable, eternal night! And as we look we hear repeated over and over and over again the warning of this Eastern sage, "At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

LESSON FOR MAY 15

GROWING HATRED TO JESUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."—Matt. 12. 30.

NO NEUTRALITY IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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THE full sense of this text is felt only in the light of the supreme authority of the Master, the paramount importance of his mission, the deep hurt of the human race. Christ Jesus came to save men, all men who would believe; not those alone who lived in his time, but those who should be born in the ages to follow. Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, speaks of the great ruin and the only efficient remedy—salvation by faith. Martin Luther shook the Christian world with the thought that justification by faith is the great doctrine of Christianity, "the article of a standing or a falling church." John Wesley aroused the dormant English Church by the same cry. Broadus, in his sermon on "Justification by Faith," truly said, "Yet it is not true that the doctrine of salvation by faith is all of the gospel." We do not hear anything of that doctrine in the writings of John. His way is to present the divine side of Christ's character in order to emphasize his authority and make its supremacy appear; that we might centralize our forces and the good forces of all men upon him and become colaborgers with him in a mighty effort to lift the burden of depravity from human nature and permit spiritual life to grow and develop by descent of showers of the Holy Spirit, and let in the invigorating rays of the light of divine truth. To the Jews of Christ's time the earth and sea and air were densely populated by

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demons who were the causes of diseases, misfortunes, and death. They formed a vast army, thoroughly organized under the guidance and control of a powerful demon prince—Beelzebub. The rabbis pretended to cast out the devils through the magic power of adjurations, spells, and formulæ which were dangerously like the superstitions of the heathen whom they so deeply despised. They laid stress on the knowledge of the secret names of angels and of God. To utter the formulæ which stood for these was, in their belief, to set in motion the divine and angelic forces. A whole science of the black art had been invented; and it was believed that through these secret names the forces of the good spiritual world could be arrayed against the terrible hosts of evil spirits; that mists which hide the future could be dissipated; and that all diseases could be cured and calamities prevented.

Christ cast out devils too; but it was enough for him to speak the word and devils recognized him, acknowledged his authority, and obeyed his command. He set forth no philosophy of the spirit world, and seems to have acquiesced in the belief of the times; at all events, he left the philosophy of the phenomena of demon possession unsettled. These strange manifestations have been active and quite common down to present times among certain pagan tribes; but “there are more things in heaven and in earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.” Paul says, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (real organized forces), against powers (tangible forces), against the invisible world rulers, against wicked spirits in the air above us.” Be this as it may, we are assured that there is a great battle on in the sphere of human activities—the united powers of evil arrayed against the forces set for truth and the good of man.

The race created in the image of God has through some cause lost the divine momentum; is out of har-

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mony with the great universe—material and spiritual—of God, threatening to bring chaos to the whole. The Divine Architect, so to speak, has separated the earth from the harmonious whole and put it under a separate and special regime. As the courts appoint a receiver, competent and with due authority, for a bankrupt corporation; as a whole nation calls for a dictator, strong and competent, when all the customary forms of government avail not to bring peace and security; so God has given over the human race to his Son, "mighty to save," "able to deliver," with full power and competent authority. He has assumed control and exercises all authority in heaven and in earth, and has sent forth his messengers, ambassadors, into all the earth, and will continue thus to exercise authority until the "restitution of all things," when he will "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Then this earth with what it contains will enter again into fullest harmony with the rest of God's universe and move again safely among the myriad worlds with nothing to mar the sweet concord of a fully restored creation.

A great ruin it was. A great Saviour it needs. Great authority is required. If a great victory is to be gained great loyalty must be given. We must love him, be like him, obey him.

In a final analysis there is no neutrality in all the on-moving material universe. Every particle of dust is related to the vast whole. Should even one particle go wrong it would mark the beginning of chaos. Upon the crowded street one must move on with the crowd, either to struggle forward against the inertia of the slow or to be prodded and urged on by the swift. The wasted particle in the living body must be thrown off to be taken up by some other living organism and thus fulfill its destiny.

The universe of matter and the world of spirit are

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moving on in a progression which carries the indifferent and lifeless forward to a wholesome activity, or passing over it as an obstacle to progress—as an enemy to development. Everything not in harmony with the law of advance is against the established law of things.

It is just as true in the new kingdom, the kingdom of God which is come to men. The divine leader is “Captain of our salvation.” The individual soldier is a well and thoroughly armed, active participant in the desperate conflict, with the whole armor of God, from the “girdle of truth” to the “sword of the Spirit”; protected by defensive armor, the “helmet of salvation,” the “breastplate of righteousness,” and the “shield of faith”; “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,” so as to be a swift messenger; and furnished with the trustiest weapon to make strong thrusts into the vitals of the enemy. No provision is made in this campaign for spectators or neutrals. The issues involved are too great, the enemies too numerous and strong for social amenities.

Napoleon the invincible was accustomed on the eve of battle to examine personally the guards placed on the outer lines. Once after a long and weary march he found at night a sentry fast asleep. He took the gun from the unconscious soldier and paced the guard beat until the sentry awoke. In terror and shame he recognized his commander doing duty in his stead, and he fell upon his knees. With a kindly reprimand he returned his weapon to the guard, reminding him that they were in the presence of a watchful foe, and it was necessary that every man should be watchful that no surprise should find them unprepared.

The loyal soldier who risks his life for his country is nerved to do brave deeds by the thought that his fatherland expects him to do his duty; and beneath the eye of the commander he rushes forward to daring deeds.

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The interests of nations may be of great import, and the patriot is commended and honored by a grateful people; and the craven who shirks duty or is deaf to the call of his country's need is despised and his name shall perish. But the interests of humanity are vastly greater, and surely duty and devotion become vastly more a matter of consideration.

The duty of obedience to the orders of the commander in a nation's conflict may seem clear and exacting; but the great leader whom the loving Father has given us has a right to every office we can give, to every homage we can pay. He has mapped out the field. He has planned the campaign. He has chosen his generals. He calls for loyal soldiers, and says, "He that is not with me is against me."

Near the close of the civil war, in that memorable march through Georgia, the colored people all along the line of march believed Sherman and his men were the army of God sent to deliver them from their bondage. It was to them the year of jubilee; and crowds, in all sorts of vehicles, and clad in all fashions of habit, fell into line under the sheltering wings of this angel of the covenant. To remain in their place was to submit to continued serfdom, to reach the land of freedom was to join the army and move on. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Desire of the nations is on his march through the enemy's country. Our God is marching on. "There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved." Victory and Canaan lie before us. Bondage and eternal loss are behind.

The royal figures of speech with which the Scriptures are so replete are but weak expressions of a divine plan put into action nearly twenty centuries ago to save a race, of many nations but one blood, redeemed by one Christ, inspired by one faith, baptized into one baptism. The church universal of Christ is coming again into a full conception of her mission.

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With all her faults the mediæval church showed forth a wonderful spirit of loyalty to the divine Leader of the hosts of the Lord, which later centuries, though presenting a higher moral standard, have failed to approach; but we have passed through a dark and lonesome era of doubt. There is dawning a brighter day; and with brighter hopes, a fuller realization of the life of service which Christ exacts, heroes of the faith are pressing forward to a better service and a more loyal allegiance to the Prince of Peace. The Christ who cast out devils by the Spirit of God bids his militant church move on with firm reliance on the Spirit of Truth, and vivid in her memory the promise, "Behold, I am with you to the end." Then from the throne of his glory he will say to those on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. For inasmuch as ye were with me loyally and were obedient, so now receive." To those who were indifferent, "Depart from me. Inasmuch as ye did it not, as ye were not with me, ye were against me. Depart."

## LESSON FOR MAY 22

### THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

GOLDEN TEXT: "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh ■ city."—Prov. 16. 32.

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ANGER is no sign of strength or greatness. The shallow brook is ruffled and noisy, while the majestic river flows calmly to the sea. The phenomena of mental processes would indicate similar facts concerning men. Easy excitement or anger is too often as the ripples of the babbling brook, while equipoise and spirit, even amid winds of adversity and over rough channels, will not disturb a sovereign spirit. Self-control is the kindly quality of soul enjoined in our text. Man is born into two wonderful worlds, an outer and an inner, a physical and a spiritual. He is a weakling and a long way from the throne, but he is told to "have dominion." "Every step in the progress of the world has been a new control. It has been escaping from the tyranny of a fact to the understanding and mastery of that fact." Every step in the progress of a child or of a man means new conquest of a world about and within. The conquest of the outer realm is a wonderful human achievement; and the conquering of the inner realm or citadel is mastery divine.

The world is full of forces without human disposition to refuse obedience. To the sharp-eyed, keen-witted, persistent searcher after truth, every path in life is fruitful in nature's secrets. Steam, electricity, star power, animal power, air and atom, wind and water, forest and field, beast and bird, even society and

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sovereign states, yield to the control of masterful man. Examples march before us in great array: Archimedes, Galileo, Watt, Stephenson, Newton, Darwin, Spencer, Napoleon, Bismarck, Wellington, Gladstone, Washington, Grant, Lincoln, Shaftesbury, William Booth, and scores whose names stand out on history's pages as overcomers.

It is well to keep in mind that the men who conquered in the outer world have usually been rulers in the world within, and where some of them have made final shipwreck, like Alexander or Napoleon, it has been largely the unconquered, unconsecrated regions of the soul which have brought ruin.

Our thought of control should be first in the world of self, as it forms the key to greatest dominion. We do not propose a psychological study, but a plain, practical homily upon the kingship of the soul. The qualities of life which belong to right character are comprehended under what are commonly termed active and passive virtues. The world exalts the former, putting a premium upon force and self-confidence. Jesus changed the emphasis, and catalogues as beatitudes "the less honored virtues." The graces of humility, patience, contentment, forgiveness, etc., are exalted beyond the more ostentatious virtues and declared manifestations fitting to strength and greatness.

Consider some of the examples of the Old and New Testaments illustrating phases of character to avoid or to emulate. Job is a classic example of patience. Almost every trial and temptation came to test him—loss of property, health, friends. Even his wife encouraged him to "curse God and die." But he was not overthrown. In patience possessed he his soul, and he lives in literature and in human life through succeeding generations as a princely patriarch whose matchless example gives immortality to the old world drama of which he forms a chief figure.

In the history of courts come frequent lessons of

## THE DEATH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

petty traits of character in kingly setting. The Herods were the subject rulers of the Jews in the first century of the Christian era. When Herod the tetrarch was upon the throne, he became infatuated with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip. She was an unscrupulous, ambitious woman, and more than reciprocated any advance from her royal brother-in-law. To this unholy alliance the stern prophet of that day, who preached repentance to the people, was not apt to quietly assent. His rebuke went forth to Herod, the presumed executor of the law, "It is not lawful for thee." The king was angry, but afraid of the multitude. He did not dare destroy the prophet. Herodias was disappointed and plotted the death of John the Baptist, which she accomplished by foul design through an appeal to the weakness of the king. This royal pair showed weakness in the plain path of duty and were governed by petty or jealous caprice, which led them to murder.

Their victim was the opposite. Uninfluential and undaunted by danger or the fashion of the time, John the Baptist courageously fronted every difficulty and spoke truth against sin and sinner of high or low degree. In the dungeon he maintained control, and, save for the incident of earthly place, was beyond the king upon the throne.

An illustration of his spirit was shown in his relation to Jesus. Before the Nazarene had become widely known, John was followed by multitudes and had many disciples. Now the fame of Jesus is growing, and the disciples of John come to tell him of the desertion of his followers for the new Teacher. In his humanity John would naturally have showed some feeling of chagrin and disappointment or anger. Instead, with perfect mastery and even a glow of delight in his eyes, he cried, "He must increase, I must decrease." It was the recognition of an eternal law, and in losing his own light and life he saved both for all life to come.

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The example of Jesus is a supreme picture of self-mastery. Mastery over physical forces he had shown, and the people wondered, but mastery over his mental and spiritual faculties was to many an unseen and unknown world of which they little guessed. What a perfect picture of tragic history is shown by the real prophetic vision of Isaiah! "He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he opened not his mouth." Before the common people, or the ecclesiastics or the rulers of his day, he was alike calm and strong with a consciousness of the eternal majesty of righteousness. When Peter would draw the sword, he commands its return to the sheath. When John would have fire called down from heaven to destroy the inhospitable Samaritans, he rebukes him and teaches a gentler spirit.

The classic and familiar example of Alexander, with a genius for conquest but a victim of self-indulgence, shows the most promising of our youth what to avoid. It is told of Napoleon that when imprisoned upon the island of Saint Helena he had engraved upon his gold plate, "Ubi cunq[ue] felix," "Happy anywhere," and yet he was eating out his heart like a restless caged eagle.

Better the calm equipoise of a truly kingly spirit, with mastery of an inner world, than the exploits of the most successful general in war. The imperturbable Grant gained the confidence of his men because they knew that he was always in control of his powers, and with him this meant control of the enemy. Dash and vim go far toward success, but the control which can bring all the powers of the soul to bear quietly and earnestly and persistently will win the race or victory in any struggle. The first great lesson to be emphasized by the words of the wise man which form our text, and by the exhortation and example of all who in the battle of life profit by his words, is obvious.

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Be free—not chiefly from the iron chain,  
But from the one which passion forges—  
Be the master of thyself. If lost  
Regain the rule o'er chance, sense, circumstance—  
Be free.

Impatience, anger, passion is the effervescence of the evil spirit which should be sealed in deep fastnesses within the soul. It is the springing of the lid to Pandora's box whereby a thousand ills are let loose upon society. "Whoever is out of patience is out of possession of his soul," says Lord Bacon. Professor Henry Drummond brings this weakness very close home to the majority of even good people: "The peculiarity of ill-temper," he says, "is that it is the vice of the virtuous. It is often the blot on an otherwise noble character. You know men who are all but perfect and women who would be entirely perfect but for an easily ruffled, quick-tempered, or touchy disposition. This compatibility of ill temper with high moral character is one of the strangest and saddest problems of ethics. No form of vice, not worldliness nor greed nor gold, not drunkenness itself does more to unchristianize society than evil temper. For embittering life, for breaking up communities, for destroying the most sacred relationships, for devastating homes, for withering up men and women, for taking the bloom off childhood, in short, for sheer gratuitous misery-producing power, this influence stands alone."

Temper has been defined as nine tenths of Christianity. Certainly it is the lesson of all others which the nervous, restless, impatient youth of America need to learn. In order to our greatest happiness, our greatest achievement, our greatest influence for God and humanity, we must feel the "touch of an infinite calm." Like Theodore Parker we might frankly say, "The trouble is that God is not in a hurry, but I am." Yet we should remember that God knows the end from the beginning and makes no mistake in his unfolding plans and fruitful work.

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We are in feverish haste even in what are supposed to be recreative periods. Indeed, there is more than satire in the statement that "Saint Martha is the patron saint of our women and Saint Vitus of our men." We need to learn by experience that "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee, because he trusteth in thee." Perfect peace follows perfect trust. Infinite calm is appropriated to finite experience, and we know what Jesus meant in his invitation, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

The world will ever be full of difficulties. Petty and great annoyances will ever occur to disturb our daily round and ruffle our spirits. Jesus did not pray that his disciples might be taken out of the world or freed from annoyance, but that they might "be preserved from the evil one." He even promises sufficient grace for every trial.

Science would teach us to gain control by the installment plan; little acts of spirit or mind solidifying into habits, and habits into character. True indeed for the habit, but the confident trust of to-day will bring sufficient strength for the control of the day's disturbing elements until the continued experience shall enable both nature and grace to stand stronger in regnant control of the soul than the mightiest of rulers over cities or states.

## LESSON FOR MAY 29

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### THE MULTITUDES FED

GOLDEN TEXT: "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life."—John 6. 35.

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'Twas seedtime when He blessed the bread,  
'Twas harvest when He broke.

SEEING the miracle the people would not let him go. They said, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world"; and they followed him because of the loaves and fishes. They said, "We will make him a king by force; he can supply an army with food; he can overthrow Herod and throw off the oppressive Roman yoke and make Jerusalem his capital; with a leader having such power as this we cannot be defeated, for he can make every blade of grass into a spear with which to fight our enemies." But Jesus, perceiving that they would make him a king by force, departed into the mountain alone to commune with his Father and strengthen himself in prayer. During the night the disciples took ship, and a great storm arose, and in the midst of their fright they saw Jesus coming to them walking on the sea, and saying, "It is I; be not afraid." Thus Christ ever appears to his followers to allay their fears.

I know not where his islands lift  
Their fronded palms in air;  
I only know I cannot drift  
Beyond his love and care.

Again he had mystified the people, for they saw only the boat gone in which the disciples had embarked, and they knew Christ had not been with them, but since they could not find him they too follow the

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disciples to the other side of the sea; and when they find him there, their first question betrays their curiosity concerning the means of his coming: "Rabbi, when camest thou hither?" Christ answered them, not by satisfying their curiosity, but by telling them that it was their misconception of the purpose of his miracles, their failure to recognize in themselves their greater need which he alone could supply, merely the loaves and fishes, the meat that perisheth, which had brought them. Then he told them of the meat that endureth unto everlasting life, the bread of God that cometh down from heaven and giveth life to the world, and offered this as the more precious thing than the multiplied loaves and fishes.

*The Meat that Perisheth.* What is it? All that the world offers, without Jesus Christ, and yet men to-day prefer rather the meat that perisheth than the bread of God; the world passeth away with all the gifts within its power, and yet people live as though it endured forever. Greed and wonder are controlling motives in life to-day as then, and just as men tracked Christ to Capernaum for their stomachs' sake, and to satisfy their ambition would have made him a king, so men labor for the temporal and transient things that soon pass away. The visions the world gives are like the visions of the traveler in the Arabian desert. Out of the desert wastes there arises before him a city with its houses and temples, with towers and turrets; or weary and thirsty he sees a landscape fair and beautiful which seems just before him; he sees the long-desired oasis with its springs of water surrounded by trees with their cooling shade, but even as he tries to reach the scene it disappears and leaves to his disappointed vision only the same dreary waste of sand which he saw before. It was a mirage—a splendid delusion, and nothing more. Such are the gifts of the world, the meat which perisheth.

Literature is full of expression of the failure of the

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earthly to satisfy the soul's need. Solomon saw the world under very favorable conditions, but his verdict was, "All is vanity." Byron with his rank, wealth, and genius rendered his verdict that there is no contentment or happiness in it. Alexander conquers the whole world and then sits down to weep, for this does not satisfy the longing of his soul; for God has not made a soul so small that a world can satisfy it. To feed a soul on the meat that perisheth is like satisfying one's thirst with salt water; it is like satisfying one's eye with the mirage of the desert. During the Jewish famine of 1849 a nobleman invented a kind of curry powder of which he boasted that if taken by the starving peasants it would destroy all the cravings of hunger. It had in it no nutritive qualities, and like this all the world's remedies for the soul's hunger are mere unsatisfying mockeries.

*The Bread of Life.* What is it? Christ declares, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." The ancient Greeks sang of the food of the gods, ambrosia and nectar, food of divine delicacy and flavor of which no mortal could ever partake, but God sendeth down out of heaven to us the food of the immortals and invites whosoever will to come to the feast,

A perpetual feast of nectared sweets,  
Where no crude surfeit reigns;

food that satisfies the longing of every hungry soul, light for the eye, sound for the ear, bread for food, wine for weariness, peace for trouble, life, abundant life, eternal life for this fleeting earthly existence whose end is death, to all who partake of this feast.

We hunger for love; he brings us the greatest love in the world, the matchless love of God, of which he is the visible expression unto mankind. We hunger for pardon; he brings us pardon. He speaks as never man spoke before, with the authority of God, saying,

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"Thy sins be forgiven thee," and hearing him we know we are forgiven. We hunger for power, and as all power was given unto him, so it is ours, for his strength becomes ours and we live our lives on the same strength which he had. We hunger for life and he brings it to us, saying, "I am the way, the truth, the life." He gives to us the life that is life indeed. We feel our strangerhood and long for a guide in the world's wilderness, and his Spirit becomes the soul's one perfect and unfailing guide. We hunger for God. In every soul there is a hunger to know God, a cry for God. It has been expressed in various ways by all peoples and tribes. No man ever gets so low, even though he is so far down he has to reach up to touch bottom, that there is not somewhere in his soul a crying for God, and nothing else but God will ever satisfy that cry. Sometimes a father is left in the house to care for a babe, his babe. The mother goes away and for a while all is well; then the child cries. The father pacifies it for a time, but soon the cry becomes more insistent and somehow he can't seem to be able to stop it. He may transgress every law a mother has laid down for babyhood; he may feed it jam and cake, he may give it every forbidden article in the house to play with; in despair he may walk it and toss it and tumble it and sing to it, but the baby only cries the harder. It wants something that he cannot find, no matter how hard he tries. After a tempestuous day a step is heard and the door opens, the mother's face appears, and that babe, weary with its long sobbing, looks upon the face of the mother and its own little face lights up with smiles and gladness as if it had never known a tear, and cuddling down in its mother's arms it coos and laughs, for it has found the one thing in the world that could finally satisfy it—its mother's arms. Nothing else would do but this. That father had no power to still its cry; but stop—he had the power, he could have put his hand over the little mouth

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and with his greater strength could have held it there until the little voice was hushed forever; and that is what we sometimes do to the cry of our own souls for God, whose face and love alone can satisfy.

We hunger for God; we cry, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," and Christ says to us, "I and the Father are one," and through him we both know and possess God. "I am the bread of life," is the declaration of Jesus; "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Some say, "I would know God, but not through Jesus Christ." Very well. The steamship company with its great ships has no jealousy of the man who declares, "I would cross the ocean, but I will not use your vessels; I will swim across the Atlantic"; they know it is an impossibility; and there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved except the name of Jesus Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid." When the East River bridge was built men had to devise ways and means to go down through water and mud and finally lay the foundations of the great piers that support the bridge on the solid bed rock. Nothing else would do for a foundation. So our own efforts, our own purity, our own righteousness, or the things of this world, are no more suitable for a foundation upon which to build; or the meat that perisheth sufficient to satisfy a soul's hunger than a cartload of bricks dumped into the East River would have been a sufficient foundation for the mighty span of this bridge. What, then, will you do with this bread of God? My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven, and that he himself is that bread is the declaration of Jesus.

O Bread to pilgrims given,  
O Food that angels eat,  
O Manna sent from heaven,  
For heaven-born natures meet;  
Give us, for thee long pining,  
To eat till richly filled;  
Till, earth's delights resigning,  
Our every wish is stilled.

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Better far to let the body starve than to refuse this bread. Yet men do neglect it. In the presence of the spread table they make excuse for not partaking. They say, "I must till my field"; "I have bought a yoke of oxen"; "I have married a wife"; "I have no time now; I pray thee have me excused." Excused from the presence of God and his angels; excused from partaking of that which will satisfy all our need; excused from that which means in this world the highest happiness and the greatest influence; opening the door of our hearts in response to his knocking just far enough to say, "We have no room for the One who will satisfy all our need"; closing the door to Him who hath loved us and has given himself for us.

What he endured, O, who can tell,  
To save our souls from death and hell!

Shall we spurn the gift he brings and slight the Saviour who stands with outstretched arms, or shall we say, "Lord, we will evermore eat of this bread," and join in the great ovation of heaven, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing, forever and ever"? The soul's wants and yearnings cannot be satisfied with earthly food. The baker's loaf cannot minister to the soul's hunger, but the table is spread before us with the bread that satisfies. Whosoever will may receive it through Jesus Christ. Come and partake. Make him thy daily food.

'Twas August, and the fierce sun overhead  
Smote on the squalid streets of Bethnal Green,  
And the pale weaver, through his window seen  
In Spitalfields, looked thrice dispirited.

I met a preacher there I knew, and said,  
"Ill and o'erworked, how fare you in this scene?"  
"Bravely," he said, "for I of late have been  
Much cheered with thoughts of Christ,  
The living bread."

## LESSON FOR JUNE 5

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### JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA

GOLDEN TEXT: "Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." —Matt. 14. 33.

BY WILLIAM H. McMASTER, D.D.

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WHAT a symbol of humanity is the sea, tossed by the winds, swept by the tides, and forever restless between the moon and the earth. Poor humanity, thrust out upon the quaking surface of this planet, shocked by physical convulsions, the prey of disease, the victim of poverty, and cursed by sin, is "like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt."

Yet the very restlessness of the sea indicates that it has not completely yielded to the grip of gravity, but feels and responds to the heavenly attraction. Nor is humanity complacent with physical perils, nor economic wrongs, nor moral evils. The race is restless with aspiration and struggle. Through its unrest and warfare is the longing for some divine Deliverer who shall establish peace. The object of this hope in prophetic times was called "the Messiah," "the Son of Man," "the Son of God." A critical study of the content of these phrases, which are borrowed from the Old Testament prophetic literature and which were applied to Christ by the common people and the learned as well as appropriated by himself, reveals that they mean a superhuman person, immeasurably above men and angels, who should be served by all the peoples, nations, and languages in an everlasting kingdom. Professor Sanday asserts that the church with unanimity "at the earliest date fixed upon this title [the Son of God] to con-

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vey its sense of the uniqueness of Christ's nature." The supreme works of Christ in the world's history elect him, and him only among all that ever wore earth about them, as the One worthy and able to wear this title with its full meaning. When Jesus walked on the waters and commanded the storm they said, "Of a truth, thou art the Son of God."

The miracle of Jesus walking on the sea suggests many facts. It was just the day before that Jesus received the sad news of the death of John the Baptist. His heart was sore and he wanted to be alone. "Now when Jesus heard it, he withdrew from thence in a boat, to a desert place apart." But the people intruded upon his hours of meditation and mourning, and coming in multitudes they command his compassion. The bread problem troubled the disciples, but Jesus said, "They have no need to go away; give ye them to eat." He organized the disciples and fed the multitudes, and having sent the disciples away in a boat across the sea he remained to dismiss and take leave of the crowd which had taken such hold upon his heart. "And after he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain apart to pray; and when even was come, he was there alone." This high and lonely position did not isolate him from the multitude whose needs burdened his prayers, nor from the disciples who were that night struggling in the storm which raged on Galilee. He hastens from the mountain to the sea, and walking near them the disciples see an apparition and cry out for fear; but the familiar voice of Jesus assures them, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." When Peter had learned his lesson of faith and they both had gone up into the boat the wind ceased. "And they that were in the boat worshiped him, saying, Of a truth, thou art the Son of God."

The convincing proof that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, lies in his present power to walk the stormy waters of the world's life and to bring peace where

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there is war, order where there is chaos, deliverance where there is danger.

First, there is the *storm of natural evil*. The race has ever had to combat disease, lightning, wild beasts, poisons, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes—these natural evils which have claimed their myriads of human victims. Yet in Christian lands a marked progress in the fight against these evils is noticed. There were certain old “filth diseases” of the middle ages now entirely unknown. Not two centuries ago in England and Ireland “a smooth-faced man” was one whose face was not marked by smallpox, a disease all but universal then, but now fast passing away. A decade ago the percentage of deaths in this country from diphtheria among children was eighty-one out of a hundred, now it is but eighteen, and that number is still diminishing. The wild beasts are destroyed or domesticated. The poisons are known, classified, and utilized. The lightnings are harnessed, the torrents are diverted into a thousand channels for irrigation, the tornadoes are announced hours ahead, and while neither the cause nor the cure of earthquakes is yet discovered, yet the whole world is bound in such close relations, and its heart so softened, that the news of a great natural calamity meets with such a generous response of money and supplies and scientific care that the total suffering is greatly reduced. By what principles have the laws of nature been discovered? By the open, inquiring mind of induction as set forth by the Great Teacher who made the child-mind the type and standard of the kingdom. By what motives have these tireless investigations been prosecuted? The same motives of devotion to the relief of mankind that inspired and commanded the heart of Jesus Christ. In what countries have these glorious results been produced? In none other but those that have exalted Him who said, “He that doeth the will of my Father shall know.” Jesus Christ is walking on the waters in the storm of

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natural evil, and while we see not yet all things put under his feet, we see Jesus, who is the prophecy and pledge that humanity as she follows his leadership shall yet come to complete dominion over the earth.

Then there is the *storm of economic injustice*. That day Christ had faced the hungry multitude. He had compassion on them. Their hunger appealed to him. "They need not go away," he said. Can it be denied that Jesus is interested in the bread problem? Should the church be indifferent to the problem of poverty? As the hungry and poor turn from the church, will not some mighty leader who sees the solution of the economic problem stay the exit and in the name of Jesus Christ say, "These need not go away"? Christ can walk these waters too. He can quell this storm also. "If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit?" Can Jesus Christ approve of the present economic system by which one man shall own the natural resources and tools of production, thereby amassing not millions but billions of dollars, while another man, honest and hard-working, shall with difficulty find work and finding it have still greater difficulty to keep the wolves of hunger and poverty from the door of his home? Can it be right that so much waste shall be on the avenue and so much want in the alley? Can it be right that the avenue and the alley are so close together and yet so far apart? Whatever be the solution, no Christian can accept the present system as final nor approve it as just. Christ is in much of the great unrest and discontent of these times of ours. He still has compassion on the multitudes and he shall feed them. The social and industrial order shall be changed to a better order from which shall be cast out all injustice and robbery and oppression. The advancing feet of the Christ, glowing as though they did burn in a furnace, shall

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tread down every economic theft and make a smooth and safe path for the feet of the poor.

But still more perilous is the *storm of moral evil*. The keenest sorrows of earth are the result of man's sin. Herod destroys the home of Philip, breaks the heart of his own wife, and then robs the earth of the true man who dared to rebuke his crime. What a shocking grief was the murder of John the Baptist, of whom Jesus said, "There hath not arisen born of woman a greater than John the Baptist"! It drove Jesus to solitude and prayer. Think of the mighty river of sinful consequence flowing down through the history of our race—of all the imprisoned and persecuted for righteousness' sake, of all the sufferings of the innocent for the sins of others, of all wars, feuds, extortions, unsocial actions, all slaveries, all serfdoms, all tyrannies! What a storm of sin surges over the earth and rends the race! Yet the world grows better. Love is taking the place of lust, faith is superseding fear, peace is supplanting war, order is growing out of barbarism. Jesus Christ alone has solved the problem of sin, the supreme problem of the race. He had wrought the moral miracle whereby "God can be just and still the justifier of him that believeth." His followers are the only class of people in the world who are making attack upon the despairing strongholds of sin. They are banishing slums, piercing to death old enslaving superstitions, crowding barbarism off the earth. They are hopeful of success. What they have accomplished so far gives faith a firm footing in fact.

As Jesus stands at the center of the scenes connected with this Sunday school lesson, the one bond that relates him to them all is *sympathy*. When John is murdered it drives him to solitude. When the crowd is hungry his heart has compassion. When he takes leave of the crowd he goes to the mountain for prayer. When the disciples struggle in the storm he flies to their relief. When Peter sinks he saves him. Sym-

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pathy for the victim of enthroned evil, sympathy for the unorganized and unshepherded masses, sympathy for the calamity-stricken, sympathy for the man sinking in his doubt and weakness—such was the sympathy of our Lord. The present need of the world is a sympathy which rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth, which not only prays in the mountain top but hastens to the sea and the plain to give practical relief, which has hands to lift burdens, to banish wrongs, to perfect the kingdom of good will. Such sympathy has Christ inspired. By such sympathy has civilization been wrought out. As Christ is formed within humanity the storms of evil subside.

Long before his coming a prophetic singer believed that God would give peace for war and calm for storm.

For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind,  
Which lifteth up the waves of the sea.  
They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the  
depths:  
Their soul melteth away because of trouble.  
They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man,  
And are at their wits' end.  
Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,  
And he bringeth them out of their distresses.  
He maketh the storm a calm,  
So that the waves thereof are still.  
Then are they glad because they be quiet;  
So he bringeth them unto the haven of their desire.

How like the storm-tossed sea is humanity! How like the Jehovah “who maketh the storm a calm” is our Lord Jesus Christ, who calmed stormy Galilee and is speaking peace over the surface of the troubled world! Let us give this One the homage of worship. Let us confess him the Christ, the Son of God. He gives into the hands of such confessing disciples the keys that shall unlock every problem, the power to quell every storm—personal, economic, social—which shall confront or vex humanity in its upward struggle to the kingdom of Christlike sympathy.

## LESSON FOR JUNE 12

### THE CANAANITISH WOMAN

GOLDEN TEXT: "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."—Matt. 15. 28.

By A. H. TUTTLE, D.D.

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JESUS had retired from his own country into Phoenicia seeking privacy. But "he could not be hid." Just as you cannot hide the light without extinguishing the flame or completely conceal the violet that breathes out its fragrance, so real worth is self-revealing. Private virtue is as truly an impossibility as a dark sun or a soundless noise. It is not always recognized as such and welcomed. Still its presence is felt. It awakens the rage and opposition of hearts that are not attuned to it. The very sun that calls forth the latent beauties of vital seeds only hastens the decay of things that are dead. But wherever there is an aching heart or a soul yearning for truth it will find Him who can minister to it as unerringly as the bee finds the flower that holds the honey it seeks.

So while Jesus sought privacy in the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and "would have no man know" his whereabouts, there came an unhappy woman, the mother of a child "grievously vexed with a devil," beseeching him to pity her in her sorrow and drive the evil spirit from her daughter. The incident illustrates so fully the triumph of an earnest soul over every conceivable difficulty that it stands out among the Bible stories as a luminous instance of "victorious faith." Let us study the two things here related of this woman—her difficulties and her triumph.

I. Her hindrances were fourfold. 1. She was one of those who by accident of birth and surroundings

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are the very farthest removed from religious privileges. It is a startling thing, when we come to consider it closely, that some men stand a better chance of heaven than others; and that by the mere accidents of life which they could not control. There are some men who seem born to be saved. Their ancestors for many generations have been Christian. Religion is in the blood. While we believe that there is no law of heredity which justifies the dictum that spirituality is transmitted in the blood, nevertheless it is a fact that the strong bent of the nature is largely a thing of inheritance. It is truly said, "Nothing stands alone and causeless. Every man's character is the result of all the past, causes existing years back in the character of those from whom he came." There is profound philosophy in the old Jewish boast, "We have Abraham for our father." It is no mean privilege to be a child of a praying ancestry.

Again, not only do some men have an originally inherited religious nature, but the circumstances of their life have been such as to train that nature in the right line. They have been taught the Word, sheltered in a pure and cultivated home free from all degrading influences. Strong hands have been ever ready to lift them over hard places and help them fight temptation. Thus it seems as if they *must* be saved. The difficult thing is for them to escape being good. These are "the children of the kingdom" who, if they are lost, are lost in spite of every advantage.

There are others just the reverse of this: born of a notably wicked line, trained from infancy in wickedness, men who have never seen the interior of a church or ever had a kindly Christian hand laid upon them or a special prayer offered up in their behalf. There are many whose environment is such as almost to justify the old-time Calvinistic dogma that some are born to be damned. Such was this woman. She had no natural advantages. The two evangelists make a point

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of this. The account they give of her nationality was doubtless stated for the very purpose of indicating the utter hopelessness of this woman by the fact of her birth. She was a Canaanite by descent; that is to say, she was of that race of which God had said that they were accursed and doomed and should be utterly destroyed (Deut. 7. 1, sq.). She was a Syrophenician by nation; that is to say, she was a heathen, trained in the corrupt worship of Baal and Ashtoreth, a religion the most remote from the spiritual. She was a Greek by culture; for ever since Alexander conquered Tyre, Greek culture prevailed in Phoenicia. The point the apostles make is that in every particular, in ancestry, in nationality, in religion, and in culture, this woman was the farthest removed from religious advantages. Of all people she would be the very last that we should expect would be saved.

2. A second hindrance was the apparent indifference of Him to whom she came in her distress. She cried, "Have mercy on me, thou son of David." But he answered her "not a word." In no other recorded instance did our Lord act with such apparent coldness. In most cases he sought the afflicted ones. He anticipated their needs, asking them, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He even tried to thrust himself on some he could help; or if not so, he required not to be twice asked. But in this instance he passes on apparently heedless of this poor mother's cry.

3. A third hindrance was the disciples' want of sympathy. They were annoyed by her and besought Jesus to send her away. One of the most discouraging things a soul can encounter in its search for God is the indifference of those who are numbered among the disciples. Their prejudices, their sectarianism and clannishness stand like impassable barriers between a soul and God. How many men there are who know the bitterness of that feeling spoken by one of old, "No man careth for my soul." It is not that the church

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would openly deny them the benefits of its altar and its sacraments, but it grants these benefits in a perfunctory way. Its spirit often is, "We must get rid of her. Send her away, for she calleth after us."

4. A fourth hindrance this woman encountered was a current opinion in Israel, which may be characterized as a stereotyped dogma of the church: "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." That was one of the Jewish articles of faith firmly held by the disciples—the exclusiveness of Israel's privileges. Our Lord quotes it not to sustain it, but, as appears in the sequel, to strike it a deathblow here in the presence of the apostles. There is one thing that Jesus was bent on doing, to remove every ecclesiastical and dogmatical wall which stood high between every earnest soul and God. But, in direct opposition to Christ's plain teaching on the subject, the church has often fallen in with the old habit. What earnest inquirer like this poor woman has not met with almost insurmountable difficulties in some current religious ideas which have been held in the church as the authoritative truth of God? Men have been kept away from Christ for years by such doctrines as reprobation, baptismal regeneration, apostasy, predestination, the effectual call, and others. There are those who doubt their acceptance by Christ simply because they have not been converted in the so-called orthodox way. Our speculations about the things of the divine life hang like mists over the path to heaven and darken our way. We need some mighty rushing wind to sweep over the church and clear the atmosphere of all fogs created by metaphysical dogmas. Religion is life, not creeds.

II. The woman triumphed over every hindrance. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It is not needful for us to attempt an analysis of her faith here. We must, however, name a single feature of it, which is the chief lesson taught us

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in this narrative: it was *persevering*. She would not give up. Not even the divine silence and long delay could shake her confidence. As difficulties multiplied her earnestness increased. She hoped against hope and pushed her petition in the face of every opposition. Hers was what an eccentric divine has called "a bulldog faith." She resembled that animal in holding fast even when whipped and by sheer continuance converting defeat into victory. That seems to be the rule in every department of life. It is not the man who has the most genius or is surrounded with the greatest advantages, but who can hold longest against odds, that carries the palm. Impossibilities yield to him who perseveres in his faith.

Do you ask, "Why the *protracted* prayer?" and wonder why God does not grant the request on the first asking? I reply by first asking a question: Why pray at all? If you need a thing that is right for you to receive why does he not give it you without any asking? Why should he be inquired of? The answer is simple and satisfactory. He withholds his gifts that he may bestow upon us that which is infinitely greater than the thing we ask—namely, *Himself*. If we obtained every good without prayer we would soon forget him. We would lose the supreme good in the secondary good so easily received. We would lose the giver in the gift. But when we are compelled to go to him and ask for what we want, then in our prayer we recognize him.

For that very reason *protracted* prayer is at times necessary. Speedy answers do not make us spiritually minded as do those long delays which keep us crying day and night unto him. Hence he bears long with us. Some of us remember our early efforts in prayer: how we cried to God when the heavens seemed like brass; how we prayed and prayed in vain till we felt that God did not care, and dreadful doubts haunted us and almost drove us to despair. We know better now. We

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know that the delayed answer which made prayer seem so unreal came not from divine indifference but from loving mercy. The despairing struggle long protracted led us behind our immediate want to our deepest need, which was *him*. With the coming of God into our inner personal life came also the power that was equal to every emergency. Who has not sung,

The thorn it was poignant, but precious to me;  
'Twas the message of mercy—it led me to Thee?

I am sure that we do not strain the story beyond its evident meaning when I say that this was the experience of this Canaanitish woman. She went to Jesus as the famous "son of David," the Great Jewish Messiah who could heal the sick and by power supernal cast out evil spirits. But beyond that what more could he be to her? But when he turned away from her and refused to hear her cry, her agony became such as to open the profoundest deeps of her soul. She drops the official title "son of David" and repeats only the personal term "Lord." She is coming into closer touch with him. When he spurns her appeal with, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and give it to dogs," her awakened sense of some personal relation to him gives her the reply which won for her the victory. She found in the very refusal a promise. "Dogs," the term by which Israel designated all Gentiles—"Yes, I am one; but I am under the Master's table, and may expect the crumbs that the children let fall." That consciousness was at once the result of the protracted delay and the secret of her triumph. And he said unto her, "For this saying go thy way" (Mark); "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew).

## LESSON FOR JUNE 19

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### THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

GOLDEN TEXT: "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."—James 1. 21 (R. V.).

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THE most popular metaphor of the Christian life is probably that of a warfare; and the most beloved figure for the Christian is that of a soldier. Every Christian congregation sings with a certain spiritual patriotism, "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" "Soldiers of the Cross, Arise," and no one will estimate the contribution made to Christian fidelity and enthusiasm or the inspiration given to beleaguered men and women by the great martial hymns and the stirring symbolism they employ and glorify. But it is at least remarkable that none of these figures originated with Jesus. He said that he had come to bring not peace but a sword, but declared that his servants would not fight because they were not of this world, and the militant imagery of the church does not spring from his speech. The symbolism of warfare is from Saint Paul, whose wide experience in many lands and whose catholic sympathy enables him to put all that he saw or felt into the body of his message.

This is not to say that our imagery of warfare and our metaphors of the soldier are inaccurate and uninspirational, for they are neither; they are helpful and inspiring and will continue so to be because they appeal to and evoke what are among the most effective elements in human life. But Jesus's conception of spiritual life

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was fundamentally otherwise. It was not as a capture that he saw it, nor as the booty from a siege; but rather as a process of growth and the product of a development. William Henry Channing was near the truth when he wrote of it, "to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common," though this is only partially correct; for the growth of the spiritual may sometimes be unrecognized at the time, but it can never be unbidden. There must always be the open soul and the welcome of the heart. This, however, is the conception which, with Jesus, the apostle James holds. Spiritual character is not a prize to be won simply by strokes and blows and a battle; it is a harvest from long-cultivated fields. To gather the full meaning of the text we must go back to a preceding verse: "Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." The quiet, patient soul, guarding itself soberly from useless speech and, by rigorous self-restraint, preserving itself from the wasting energies of intolerance, anger, irritability—there is the soul to whom the injunction comes, not with severity alone, but with power and a certain hope.

"Wherefore putting away all filthiness"—meaning thereby not only sins of uncleanness, but whatever tempers, attitudes, tendencies of mind may be implied in the word "wrath," and which incrust the soul—"and overflowing of wickedness"—the exuberance of evil conduct—"receive with meekness the implanted word." It is the simple yet convincing picture of the processes of growth and culture, transferred and fitting to the spiritual life. Side by side with it you can put the parable of the sower; and the pictures blend in one, and the message of Jesus and the message of James are one and the same.

1. Life's first duty is that of preparation.. The world's work has halted, not for lack of workers but for lack of fields ready for them. Moral catastrophe is not so much due to failure of achievement as to fail-

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ure of preparation. Jesus came unto his own and his own received him not; they were not prepared for him. The tragic biography of one of Israel's recreant kings is written in a sentence: "He did evil because he prepared not his heart." He did evil not because he loved sin but because he did not get ready for saint-hood. Unprepared, God came to him and left him as godless as before. So Jesus and Paul and James have alike insisted on man's share in the labor of his own redemption. "Abide in me," "We are laborers together with God," "Put away filthiness"—these are their words. You could write either sentence underneath the picture of the sower.

"Some fell by the wayside." When Jesus said that he touched upon one of the primeval chords of romance. Who has not dreamed above a summer road of the unknown towns it touches and the unknown lands it sees? Jesus peoples all the gospels with pilgrims, and everywhere he goes you can see the roads of Palestine. "It was up and down these roads," writes George Adam Smith, "that the immortal figures of the parables passed. By them came the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, the king departing to receive his kingdom, the friend on a journey, the householder arriving suddenly upon his servants, the prodigal son coming back from the far-off country" (*Hist. Geog.*, 430f.). The road is hard like a floor where these countless feet have passed, and the seed falls impotent upon the impervious crust of clay.

There is the figure of the unprepared heart, for sin is a process of hardening. Not an idea, an act, a speech, an association but leaves its results upon the soul. Through every life, as travelers through a noble country, the innumerable influences of experience pass. There is the tramp of the merchantman, the impact of the search for gain. There is the tramp of the king, the impact of the strife for power and place. There is the tramp of the friend, the impact of society and asso-

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ciation. There is the tramp of the surprised householder, the impact of disillusionment and disappointed confidence. There is the tramp of the prodigal, the impact of vagrant and undisciplined desires. Life open to all these and unguarded by the vigilance of spiritual industry hardens under the persistent influences. "Receive the word," says James; "The seed is the word of God," says Jesus as reported by Saint Luke. But the seed cannot get through. Not in the same connection but very germane to the thought is Burns's poet-philosophy:

I waive the quantum o' the sin,  
The hazard o' concealing;  
But, och! it hardens a' within,  
An' petrifies the feeling!

### Sin petrifies the heart.

"Some fell upon stony ground." Whoever has bent his back above a hoe in some New England field or on some Pennsylvania slope where the stones lie thick will recognize the scene that Jesus saw. Between the seed, however good, and the rich soil underneath, the hidden stones intrude. The grain springs quickly, its roots soon reach the dislocating stones beneath, and the stalks wither before they come to head. There, too, is the picture of the unprepared heart. For sin is a process of disconnection. The imbedded interests of unspiritual tempers, unsuspected in the times of spiritual sowings, when the lusts of the kingdom are in every heart and the enthusiasms of service are in every hand and the joy of Christian fellowships binds kindred souls in common associations, disconnect the seeds of spiritual life from the nurturing depths within. Personal concerns asserting themselves within the heart prevent the vital intrenchment of spiritual things. Religion is maintained as a surface matter for a time; then ends in the withered promises of ecstasies that could not last. Rootless grains die under the blistering sun; rootless spirituality, if that be not a contradiction in

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terms, dies under the stress of practical life. The heart has not been prepared by the expulsion of the disconnecting elements.

There is yet another phase of the unprepared heart. It not only is negative of religious result, as illustrated in the preceding figures; it has positive evil consequences. "Some seed fell among thorns." Sin is a process of suppression. No soil is without productiveness and no life without result. The uncultivated earth puts forth its thorns and weeds; the unprepared heart blossoms in unspiritual energies and acts. This is the law of the survival of the fittest made plain: the thorns survive the struggle where the soil is not prepared and the unspiritual triumphs where the heart is undisciplined. "Wherefore put . . . away all overflowing of wickedness." What some of these unspiritual energies are, Jesus puts in a sentence: the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. The anxieties of the untrusting smother spirituality, while faith withers under the choking influences of prosperity.

To put away all filthiness and overflowing wickedness will be to disintegrate the crust which unspiritual things have formed upon life, expel the disconnecting elements of imbedded interest, and uproot the multiplying energies of evil which are the natural product of spiritual neglect.

2. There is involved, however, more than the preparation of the heart. "Putting away . . . receive." There is the exercise of the prepared heart. There is a large place for question, criticism, debate, in the Christian life and experience. One has verily to try the spirits whether they be good; to prove all things, holding fast only to that which is good. But there are certain grave and splendid mysteries of the faith, certain stupendous contradictions which are above though not contrary to the reason. With these there are certain experiences of quietude and peace and certainty, for which not all the modern psychology has

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any adequate explanation. Those who most surely believe and those who most surely experience can give no consistent description of their spiritual processes. They seized upon a promise, an exhortation, a proclamation beyond their comprehension but answering the unuttered appeal of the heart, and unable to say "Lo, here! or Lo, there!" awoke to find that the kingdom of God was within them.

Such experience as this is part of the distinctive mystery of the faith. One may speculate, he cannot demonstrate; he may indulge belief until it blooms in Christian certainty. It is the soil accepting in prepared places the seed with all its mysterious chemistries of expansion and decay, thrusting root and rising stalk, garnering carefully all the undiscovered powers of growth and reproduction, open to all the influences of sun and shower—it is this soil whose waving harvests enrich the granaries of the world. It is the soul like this, accepting in quiet reverence the word of God, that deals with undiscovered mysteries of grace; garnering carefully all the dear experiences of thought and feeling; trusting patiently for uncomprehended processes of spiritual endowment, promised though not disclosed; it is a soul like this which thrusts the bloom and fruitage of Christian character and service into the life and experience of the world. For strangely one cannot deal thus with the word without at last realizing the presence of another mystery, the Word which is God; and the prepared heart, exercising itself in openness and belief, knows, beyond all definition and beyond all doubt, the consummate blessedness of Christ within, its hope of glory.

## LESSON FOR JUNE 26

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### PARABLE OF THE TARES

GOLDEN TEXT: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."—Matt. 13. 43.

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"*THEN*" is the emphatic word in this sentence. *Now*, in this present age, there is a mingling of the good and evil, the righteous and the wicked. *Then*, in the end of the world, the consummation of the age, there shall be the clear revelation of the true character of the wicked and the righteous, and, in accordance with that revelation, the condemnation of the wicked and the reward of the righteous; for the one the flame of the furnace, for the other a glory as of the sun, shining in a cloudless sky.

The parable of the tares has given rise to endless discussion. But it would seem as though there were little room for difference of opinion if the Saviour's words were closely followed. The sower of the good seed is the Son of man, even Jesus the Christ. The sower of the tares is the devil. In the present age, from the beginning of human history even until the final coming of our Lord in judgment, God has an antagonist, active, crafty, malignant, the devil, "the ape of God." The mystery of this fact is not explained, but the fact is in evidence on every page of the Scriptures.

The good seed is the sons of the kingdom, the righteous. The tares are the sons of the evil one, the wicked. It is important to follow the divine order in the Holy Scriptures. The parable of the sower precedes and in part interprets the parable of the tares. Bad

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men are not flung out upon the world from the hand of the devil in irresponsible fatality. Good men are not sown by the hand of the Lord in sovereign power. Good men become righteous as they receive the word into good and honest hearts; as the word of the Lord is sown in them, so do they become wheat for the world. Bad men become wicked as they welcome the wiles of the devil into unbelieving and evil hearts; as the wiles of the devil are sown in them, so do they become tares for the world.

The field is the world, not the church; Jesus is not laying down a law for church discipline, but declaring a world-wide principle in the progress of the kingdom. He claims the whole world as his field, but in the present age goodness must live and grow amid antagonisms. The anomaly will always be presented of wicked men not only being permitted to exist but even flourishing. In the development of the kingdom of God in this age the righteous and the wicked will grow side by side.

The harvest is the end of the world, the consummation of the age. Wickedness ripens to doom, righteousness ripens to glory. When the harvest is fully ripe, then shall the Son of man send forth his angels who shall bind the tares into bundles and burn them, but gather the wheat into his barn. We note:

I. *Now*, the time of mingled good and evil. The eager reformer would call down fire from heaven to destroy the wicked, would immediately and utterly root out evil. The perplexed child of God finds his faith shaken and his feet almost slipping as he beholds the wicked not only existing but flourishing. Very vividly was this set forth by the psalmist: "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped. For I was envious at the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued

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like other men. Therefore pride is as a chain about their neck; violence covereth them as a garment. . . . And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?" In the presence of such wicked existence and prosperity the psalmist is inclined to say, "Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocence; for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." He was inclined to say this but he did not speak; for the sake of his brethren's faith he kept silent and burned his own smoke. Wise men preach their beliefs, and keep their doubts in their own hearts. When he received light upon his difficulty he taught others.

Jesus does not give us the solution of all our perplexities with reference to the existence and extension of evil in the world, but in the parable of the tares he does suggest reasons for this fact. The outstanding reason is the intertwining relationships of society. When the servants discovered the tares they said, "Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" But he said, "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them." When both are growing side by side in a field the roots of the tares and the wheat are so interlaced that in rooting out the tares the wheat also would be destroyed. In the mingled relationships of this present time, in social, business, and political life, to destroy the wicked would be to destroy the whole social fabric. It is also true that in the earlier stages of their growth there is no clear demarcation between the wicked and the righteous. At first the tares can hardly be distinguished from the wheat. Not only is it true that in society there is the mingling of the good and evil, but in the development of the individual life there are mixed motives, there is development amid antagonisms, the good and the evil dwell together in the heart. "When I would do good, evil is present with me"; "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit

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and the Spirit against the flesh"; and life is not to be judged by the single event, the outer act is not always a sure revelation of the true character of the heart. Evil does not immediately clothe itself with evident wickedness, neither does goodness immediately declare itself in resplendent and abiding righteousness. At the harvest time the tares lift their black heads above the bowed heads of the golden wheat. Then they are easily marked and may be gathered. Wickedness at last declares itself not only by its black guilt, but by its proud arrogance. Righteousness finally makes itself clearly known as much by its humility as by the golden beauty of its character.

The judgment day will make no mistakes in its winnowing. As well we are reminded by this parable that we are in a probationary existence; destiny is not now fixed. Dean Alford well says: "We are not to suppose that wheat can never become tares, or tares wheat; this would contradict the purpose of Him who willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; and this gracious purpose shines out through the command, 'Let both grow together till the harvest.'" In this present age the wicked grow beside the righteous. They may make it difficult for the righteous to grow and may mar their happiness, but they shall not destroy their life. On the other hand, the righteous shall prove their life not only as they grow in grace, but as they lead the wicked beside them to that life of faith whose fruit is righteousness.

II. *Then*, the time of separation between good and evil. The tares and the wheat shall not always stand side by side, the righteous shall not always dwell with the wicked. There is coming a time of absolute and eternal separation. When the psalmist entered the sanctuary and waited on God in worship he received a revelation of the end of the wicked and the righteous that cleared his doubts and gave him a word of certain testimony. Of the wicked he says: "Surely thou settest

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them in slippery places: thou casteth them down to destruction. How are they become a desolation in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." Of himself, as representing the children of God, he says: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." In the parable of the tares Jesus says: "The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

God is not unconcerned in the presence of wickedness or unmindful of his own. Now he is patient in his long-suffering, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, and his goodness leadeth to repentance. Then shall he be swift in his judgment, visiting the wicked with his sore displeasure, glorifying the righteous with the light of his approving countenance. Wickedness shall one day be made known in its uncovered shame and deformity. In the day of judgment it can wear no disguises. Righteousness shall one day be revealed in its beauty and perfection. It shall shine forth as the sun floods the heavens with its brightness, emerging from the clouds which have shrouded its glory.

The punishment of the wicked shall be appalling. "They shall be cast into the furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." I do not attempt to interpret these words. I let them stand in all their appalling suggestiveness. I remind you that they were

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spoken by Jesus, who is not only full of grace but also of truth. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God; for our God is a consuming fire." The reward of the righteous is glorious. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Their reward shall be not so much the glory revealed to them as the glory revealed in them; the perfection of their nature in the conformity of their life to the glorious image of their Saviour, and, as well, the blessedness of their service. They shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, illuminating, quickening, guiding. Of the kingdom of their Father there shall be no end, and their sun shall never go down. Therefore live in the present world in the light and anticipation of the world to come. Let faith be steady, sustained by the words of Christ. Let hope be unshaken in anticipation of the coming glory. Seek after righteousness, for it alone can stand the test of judgment. Look often at the present day from the other side of the judgment day. This is the life of probation. That is the life of realization. Live for eternity, looking not at the things which are seen but the things which are not seen.

Here and now we must lay the greater emphasis on personal life and character, while we do not forget the common good. Then, in the kingdom of the Father, "the highest blessedness shall be in mutual fellowship and service." Alexander Maclaren says: "Freed from all association with evil, the righteous are touched with a new splendor caught from him, their Saviour, and blaze out as the sun; for so close is their association that their mingled glories melt as into a single light. Now, amid gloom and clouds, they gleam like tiny tapers far apart; then, gathered into one, they flame in the forehead of the morning sky, 'a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.'"

## LESSON FOR JULY 3

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### PICTURES OF THE KINGDOM

GOLDEN TEXT: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." —Rom. 14. 17.

By CHARLES F. SITTERLY, PH.D., S.T.D.

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THE kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, as Matthew prefers to call it, is the chief subject of this Gospel. Matthew, though a Hebrew and a member of one of the proudest families and tribes of his nation, if his other name, Levi, has full significance, was still a willing subject of the Roman empire. He had even, for a time, subjected himself to a sort of ostracism from his own people in order to serve his foreign masters the better. It is not far from the truth to say that Rome during the first Christian century, and very often since, has stood for the kingdom of this world, and even for the kingdom of Satan. It is easy to contrast Cæsar, either Julius or Augustus, or any of the emperors, with Jesus Christ, and it is very clear that Jehovah permitted the crown of the Cæsars in Jesus's day to cover about as much of earthly and Satanic power as has ever been known in human history. Matthew, both from his racial training and instincts and from his years of familiarity with the spirit and workings of Rome, was peculiarly fitted to trace these contrasts and to feel the force and utter diversity between the king and the kingdom of earth and the King and the kingdom of heaven. He knew very well that you cannot have a kingdom without first having a king, and his Gospel most happily begins with a number of pictures of this great personage as the head of the kingdom of heaven. Our International Committee

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has chosen this year to pass by all of these, taking even the Christmas lesson from another Gospel. It is, of course, nothing but a coincidence that this fact is quite in keeping with the method of many nowadays who eagerly seize the benefits of the kingdom, yet utterly ignore their obligation of loyalty to the King. They press for relief from leprosy, but forget to return and give glory to God their healer; they clamor for loaves and fishes, but do not recognize the hand of the Giver.

With Matthew the king precedes the kingdom, and first in order comes the lineage of the King. How marked is the difference between anything which any Cæsar could ever claim in the way of genealogy and that which Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, presents, and how sharp the contrast is made by painting in, true to life, the unspeakable bastard of an Idumæan kinglet, Herod so called the Great! How reliefful and quieting and normal again is the exquisite loftiness of bearing and simple dignity of the Magians' visit and that of their reception on the part of the princely parents of "the born King" who received the homage and the royal tokens as persons "to the manner born"!

It is Matthew who gives the four significant dreams, the slaughter of the innocents, the flight and Egyptian exile of the infant King, with one last strong word as to the type of Herod's death not rendered into English, and the almost immediate relief felt by Joseph and Mary, and their hurried return to Judah only to find that Archelaus reigned in his father's stead and that Bethlehem would be too near such a scion for Messiah to be reared. I think that Matthew is the one New Testament writer, possibly excepting Luke, who has strongly conceived and adequately drawn pen pictures of the Roman empire on the coming of heaven's King. Professor Ramsay, of Aberdeen, and Professor Ferrero, of Turin, have, in modern days, been especially helpful in confirming the synoptic standpoint in rela-

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tion to the empire of Rome. Certainly Jesus was not blind to the portentous influence and meaning of that greatest of all purely human institutions yet developed among men. His earliest consciousness must have brought him face to face with its baleful possibilities, and his growing years among the hills of Galilee, whence he could look down upon its passing pageants, Antony, Cleopatra, Pompey, and scores of royal princes making southern Syria their constant pleasure ground, impressing his mind so deeply that one of the three arch temptations which Satan was able to engage him with for several weeks of solitary wrestling on Quarantania, overlooking the pleasure palace of Cleopatra, was how he might best accept or oppose its world-wide sway. Indeed, one might wisely say that the constant and unceasing theme of all the Saviour's teaching was this same problem, how shall God's children master and overthrow this earthly and Satanic conception of empire and set up forever in its place the kingdom of their Father which is in heaven? In the five picture parables of the lesson, so peerless in their simplicity and yet fathomless in their profundity, it is clear that there is one kindred thought dominant in each. The kingdom of heaven is not like a full-grown cedar tree of the forest flinging proudly aloft its black branches against the white range of Lebanon, but it is like the smallest of all garden seeds, yea, even a single grain which a man took and cast into the fruitful soil. The kingdom of heaven is not like some prepared banquet with tables already laid and groaning beneath loads of baked stuffs, but it is like a morsel of leaven which a woman took and hid till it seemed lost in three measures of barley meal. The kingdom of heaven is not like current coin of the royal mint and superscription, but it is like unmined ore hidden beneath the forbidding surface of the common ground. The kingdom of heaven is not like crowns of superbly cut gems nor necklaces of splendidly strung pearls, but it is like

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one priceless yet hitherto unfound stone. The kingdom of heaven is not like the counters of commerce, piled high with the gorgeous products of many lands, but it is like the common dragnet of the fisherman, cast into and hauled through the dark depths of murky waters and gathering together many sorts of fish, both good and bad.

Yet despite all these startling contrasts the tiny seed becomes the mighty tree, the little leaven at length leavens the entire lump, the hid treasure is rated as of greater value than all else which a man might have, the one goodly pearl comes to outshine the coronets of queens, the garnered good severed from among the wicked shine forever in the presence of their King. The conclusion of the whole matter, therefore, is that the kingdom of heaven is measured by standards and determined by principles the direct reverse of those which prevail in the kingdom of this world; and Saint Paul, the matchless logician, could not have summed it all up in terms more simple nor in those more directly appealing to the Romans than in those of our truly golden text, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The kingdom of Rome was conceived by its architects and builders as consisting in meat and in drink and in gorgeous attire and in the triumph of cruelty and the horrors of war, and in joy in the spirit of evil. So too in the Old Testament the central lesson is the same, for the kingdoms of Egypt and of Babylon embodied exactly the same categories, and Moses and Isaiah and all the prophets said precisely the same thing in precisely the same terms, for Jehovah led his people into wilderness and into exile that they might know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God doth man live. And finally the Master of all men and King of all kingdoms uttered the same central truth in the selfsame words of reply to the seductive sugges-

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tions of the seducer of all souls and the devil of all dark demons: "Man shall not live by bread alone. . . . The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation; behold, the kingdom of heaven is within you."

Now, Paul in this epistle is discussing the problem of salvation, and his great argument falls into two grand divisions, the first eight chapters treating of the theory of salvation that is by faith, and the second eight chapters of the practice of salvation that is by works. In this second part his method of treatment is so much like that of James, the Lord's brother, in his unique ethical epistle that it seems strange that great preachers and teachers like Luther should find antagonisms between them well-nigh insurmountable. How one could be more insistent upon works than Paul or more dependent upon faith than James is difficult to conceive.

The entire chapter from which our text is taken is one long exhortation to the Roman church to exercise fervent charity toward the brother whose faith is slow to produce practical results. Paul calls him, therefore, "weak in faith," and appeals to those "that are strong" to bear his infirmities and with patience to share his weaknesses. In the immediate context the question of conscience raised by the weakling is how any real believer can be careless in the matter of eating and drinking and holyday-keeping. To him it is of profound importance that the Christian hold himself utterly aloof from any possible share in the practices of surrounding paganism. He goes to the fanatical extreme of demanding that his fellows become water drinkers and vegetarians and punctilious observers of sacred days, and Paul, the old-time Pharisee, well understands the peculiar tenacity and persistent narrowness of such wrong-headedness. But his extraordinary adroitness and ability appear in his method of meeting it. The strong brother knows full well that abstinence from meat or wine or food altogether on fast days does not constitute

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supreme sanctity. To him all days and all sorts of food are alike sacred, since both his entire time and substance are his Lord's. Very well, then, since his neighbor Christian is neither so liberal in his consecration nor so large in his conception of privilege as to things and times, let the more liberal and larger brother avoid all show of opposition and all expression of judgment, and if need be give consent to the present prejudice, "that no man put a stumbling-block in his brother's way, or an occasion of falling. . . . For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died. . . . For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Thus we see how completely Paul had learned this new method of conquest by love, not by compulsion nor by criticism. This is the method of Christ; "for Christ also pleased not himself," and refused consistently and always to use any other means of extending his kingdom. It is the new commandment, the fulfilling of the law and the prophets proclaimed in the Sermon on the Mount.

Righteousness is the Gateway,  
Peace is the Pathway, and  
Joy is the delectable End  
Of the Pilgrim's Progress,  
Righteousness is of God the Father,  
Peace of God the Son, and  
Joy of God the Holy Ghost.

## LESSON FOR JULY 10

### SPIRIT AND LIFE

GOLDEN TEXT: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."—John 6. 63.

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THE Greek poets, tragedians, and orators believed words had a power mysterious and mighty. The Romans shared this same belief; Cicero gave a military command to Scipio in Spain principally because his name augured victory. The Jews believed intensely in a mighty mystical power in words. The name Abraham revealed to a Jew a friend of God, and the name Peter a granite character. Conversely, the nature of an object or person determined the name. The nature of animals determined the names given them by Adam, whose naming of them appropriately was a tribute to his consummate intelligence. "God called the light day, and the darkness night," says Theophilus, "since man would not have been able to name these things, nor indeed anything else, if he had not received their designations from God who created them."

Change of nature involved a change of name. The son of Isaac at Peniel has power with God and man, and henceforth his name shall not be Jacob, but Israel, to comport with his augmented power. "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me."

The Hebrews esteemed words as an integral part of an object, just as wheels are of a wagon or eyes of a person. This intimate alliance between words and things imparted power from the object to the word; a power for good or ill, for the highest good or greatest evil, according to the potency of the object or person

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of which the word was a part. Jesus gave the following evaluation to words: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Civilized and uncivilized peoples throughout all ages have given momentous importance to words.

Barring interjections and imitative words, like "whisper," "rush," etc., there is no connection between words and things. Words are simply a sign to the eye or a sound to the ear to recall the objects for which they stand.

That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet.

Its fragrance would be unaffected if recalled by a wavelet of ether. Patriotism would be as easily stirred by calling this land "Columbia" as by its present name. The tenderest love would be awakened by "mother" and "child" called by any other word in the polyglot of languages and dialects. Patriotism and love are not in the words but in the people; words are simply the stimuli to call them forth.

What power words have is delegated and limited. A few strokes of the pen in a perspective drawing may surpass a multiplicity of graphic words, the artist's sketch conveying what words cannot. "The firm employs a hundred hands," is an expression of a part for the whole: the whole being the brains, muscles, moral nature, the entire man. Language is full of these synecdoches. Words at their best express only a segment of the circle, and the mind receives this segment only. "Gold" to the financier means money, to the dentist a filling, to the chemist an alloy, to the jeweler an ornament. It takes all of these and more to round out the belongings of that noble metal. The content of the word "mother" enlarges with our maturity. The maturity of ten thousand years would not give adequate content to God.

Words may falsify facts purposely or inadvertently. In the first case it is falsehood, in the second it is igno-

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rance. Words may be inherently unable to express the nature of any object. The object itself, being external to our minds, forever outside of them, might possess a nature foreign to any content words have. What connection, for example, is there between ice and the sensation of cold?

Childhood, through belief in the spiritual, apparels meadow, grove, stream, and every common sight with celestial light. Maturity, wanting in this belief, looks upon things as all-comprehending. It reckons palaces, yachts, automobiles, the tangible and visible to be the sum of all good. It measures men by the quality or quantity of things they possess. A conspicuous millionaire, like Mr. E. H. Harriman, dies. The appreciation of him by the mass of humanity is in terms of the rolling stock of a transcontinental railroad. This materialistic view denudes earth of a freshness and glory and robs life of its true purpose and value.

The people in Capernaum to whom Jesus was speaking held a materialistic conception of the Messiah. They located him in a palace attended by a retinue and opulent in the abundance of things. The Master speaks to them of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and foreshadows his death. They saw in his discourse the dethronement of the material and were offended by it. Jesus laid his probe upon their materialism bereft of the spiritual as the offense which was in them.

Were the wealth of America in crops of wheat and corn and in the output of ores—in material goods—we would exhaust the supply in twelve months; and ignorant of means for their reproduction would become a nation of paupers starving in the midst of plenty. The wealth of any country is in its inventions of agriculture and manufacture, in the principles and methods of production and consumption, in the institutions of society. These are spiritual. Their values abide a continual blessing manifested in and through the evanescent material.

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The vehicle of Christ's blessings is the material—his flesh and blood. The partaking of his most blessed body and blood preserves our soul and body unto everlasting life. The partaking of this holy sacrament is the partaking of the Spirit. The possession of the Spirit is the possession of the largest possible wealth, namely, life. "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." Jesus was so filled that even his very words were Spirit, and therefore life.

Words in themselves are blanks and blots signifying nothing. The power they have is infused into them from without by spirit. "My words," says Christ, "they are spirit." It is the spirit of hunger, of sentiency, that gives life to the bleating of the sheep. It is the spirit of intellect that gives life to the conclusions of the scholar. It is the Spirit of Christ who gives life to his words. The sheep does not understand the scholar's conclusions, for they are intellectually discerned. The scholar does not understand the words of Christ in their full purport, for they are spiritually discerned. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Without his Spirit the scholar may know the succession of words from Genesis to Revelation and be a blatant infidel, ignorant of their full life and power. Without this Spirit, Christ's words in the synagogue, on the mount, and everywhere are abracadabra. The Spirit descended upon Jesus. He breathes the Holy Spirit upon us, and, filled with the Spirit, his words are life.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!

A parrot's use of words is not the highest, nor is that of a railroad annunciator. "To talk is not to converse." The conversationalist and preacher use words in their highest function. In their highest function words emit rather than transmit. They emit the speaker's own life rather than transmit the life of

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another ■■ is the case with the parrot and station annunciator.

Recall your conversations and their numberless comments upon weather and health; yet you are neither a wizard in the one nor an expert in the other. Your aim in conversation has not been knowledge—you eschewed pedantry—but the evoking of the mind and heart of the converser. Your summary of conversations has been almost invariably an estimate of the converser's type of life. You say of him, "He is a thinker, a man of warm impulses, a doer of things."

Initial conversations are forerunners of one of three findings: (1) The person conversed with has principles, ideals, a faith, diametrically opposed to ours. This finding arouses our aversion, which leads us naturally to dote on our opponent's absence. In mediæval times it would have been cause sufficient to put him on the inquisitorial rack; in tribal times, to kill him. (2) The person conversed with holds many principles and purposes in common with us. This finding leads to toleration. Toleration, and not love, is the relation to-day among hosts of people. (3) The person conversed with discloses a mind and heart like our own. In this finding words have performed their most coveted office. We have found a life we like. We proceed to fellowship with that life with the view of assimilating it into our own life, which we do by imitation.

Jesus, being the Desire of all nations, appeals to what is fundamental in human nature. His words reveal a mind, heart, and life that we aspire to have. His life far transcends ours in degree, which only intensifies its drawing power. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." We yearn to assimilate his life whereby we can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Aspiring and

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yearning to assimilate his life and be like him, we proceed to imitate him. Whatsoever things Jesus thought as being true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, we think upon and thereby conform our minds to his. Whatsoever he abhorred, we abhor; whatsoever he loved, we love, and thereby fashion in us the same heart that is in him. Whatever is his good pleasure, we will and do, thereby forming the same habit of will and character he has.

Thinking, feeling, and doing constitute life. Our thinking, feeling, and doing as Jesus thought, felt, and did is the process whereby we assimilate his life. Thus do his words, which are Spirit, reveal his life, lead to our imitating and result in our partaking of his divine life. Jesus was unstinted in his use of words. He spoke so freely in order that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly.

Preachers, teachers, and all professing Christians, esteem the words of his mouth more than your necessary food. The latter is life physical and finite, the former is life spiritual and eternal.

Whatever crazy sorrow saith,  
No life that breathes with human breath  
Has ever truly longed for death.

'Tis life, whereof our nerves are scant,  
O life, not death, for which we pant;  
More life, and fuller, that I want.

“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”

## LESSON FOR JULY 17

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### PETER'S CONFESSION

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."—Matt. 16. 16.

BY GEORGE W. SMITH, D.D.

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A CRUCIAL period in the ministry of Christ and a supreme moment in the experience of Peter mark the confession contained in the text. The attention of the people of all classes was being fixed upon the Great Teacher. The time had come when men were beginning to account for him; hence Jesus, when he came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, propounded to his disciples this question: "Whom do men say that I the son of man am?" This query was not so much to elicit information as it was to lead the disciples to an analysis of the doctrines and theories of the Jewish teachers. He had already warned them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The fact that he was no ordinary person was taking possession of the minds of men; some of whom, from a human standpoint, were speaking in a complimentary way, while they were still blind to his true nature and mission. Hence the disciples answered his question by saying, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." They at least thought he would measure up to the type given in any one of these characters named, or that one or the other had reappeared in him, giving rise to his heroism and extraordinary doctrine.

Jesus knew what men thought of him, and he also knew how far above all human conception his real personality and his real mission rose. Did his disciples

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discern concerning him the facts of which he himself was so well aware? Thence the closer and more personal question, "But whom say ye that I am?" for the time had come when his real self and real mission must be known and proclaimed to the world. And yet he knew that such revelation would place him in the line of suffering and death.

It is from this hour that his face is set toward Jerusalem; therefore have we said that a crisis is marked by this event. Hitherto men were charmed by the words of Him who spake as never man spake, or were awakened to enthusiasm by the miracles which he wrought while ministering unto their needs. But now the issue is on, and his life and ministry must be accepted or rejected on the high plane of his divine mission as the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," is Peter's response to the closer and more direct question. It was to reveal to the disciples the higher altitude of Christian faith, in comparison with the best conceptions of men of the world, that Jesus called forth this confession. It marks also a striking experience in the spiritual development of Peter. He is truly a seer of the highest order in his discernment. His spiritual perceptions have been awakened to the keenest activity. He is indulging in no human speculations. It is not hearsay that he is repeating; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto him, but the Father which is in heaven. The implied contents of the confession are:

First, that Jesus was the subject of supernatural antecedents. Thou art the Christ, the one of whom the prophets spake centuries before he was born; indicating the family of whose lineage he was to come; the place of his nativity; the time in which he was to appear; the supernatural circumstances attending his birth, and the marvelous character of his mission. Thou art the Christ concerning whose coming the

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expectancy of the world, both Jewish and Gentile, had been aroused. Thou art the Christ in whom all human need is to be met, who art to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, the opening of the prison to the bound, and to comfort all that mourn. Thou art the one long looked for to rise to the level of human need and to be equivalent to the requirements of the race.

Such a person the world was ready and waiting for. But to whom shall he be revealed? It required quickened spiritual sensibilities to discover him amid the lowly circumstances in which he appeared. It was upon the soul of Peter that the light of heaven broke, illuminating the ages, and disclosing to him the fulfillment of that which had been foretold.

Second, that he was a being of supernatural personality. Jesus, in his questionings, referred to himself as the Son of man. Peter, in his spiritual discernment, saw him in the highest phase of his nature—"Thou art the Son of the living God." Surely his thoughts were filled with the mystery of the incarnation. For the circumstances of the birth of Christ have risen above the circumstances of the birth of any other.

So high also has the level of his life risen above the level of all other lives; absolutely immaculate in character, he might have been heard by Peter propounding to the world this challenge: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" That challenge has never been successfully met; and the circumstances of the birth of Christ were no more supernatural than was his life. No miracle that he ever wrought could surpass the miracle of his life. In all the history of the race his personality stands out alone, as the absolute exception. If any man could explain the life of Christ he could well explain all that he claimed for himself—so perfectly human on the one side, so absolutely divine on the other: spending the night on the moun-

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tain in prayer, as a human suppliant, then walking on the waves of the unyielding sea, as the eternal God; weeping as any earthly friend at the grave of Lazarus, and then with omnipotent voice calling the dead to life. Peter saw in him the miracle of the ages. Happy is the man before whose vision he appears as he really is, "the Son of the living God."

But if the antecedents of Jesus rose above the antecedents of all others, if the circumstances of his birth were above the circumstances of the birth of any other, and if the moral elevation of his life transcended that of all others, so did the supreme altitude of his teachings overtop the most commanding presentations of doctrine which the world had ever heard. Men had their codes of morals, but, at their very best, they were imperfect in comparison with what he taught. Hear him say to the religious teachers of his time: "It hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth" (as if to say, "That is an adage common among you and expresses your idea of moral relations one with another") : "but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." He burns the contrast of his teachings with theirs still deeper into their minds when he says, "It hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

The confession of Peter implied all that Jesus claimed for himself, and all that has ever been claimed for him in the supernatural antecedents and circumstances of his birth; the supreme perfection of his character, the limitless height of his teachings, and the inconceivable glory of his works. It was truly the vision of a seer that possessed the soul of the apostle when he gave

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answer to the Master's probing question, "Whom say ye that I am?" He was at the climax of Christian experience, for never before nor afterward did he reach a more commanding eminence of spiritual discernment. When, not from historical creeds, or the doctrines of men or intellectual investigation, but from the soul's deepest consciousness, one can look upon the Man of Nazareth and say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," he has found the secret of the kingdom of heaven.

Because Peter had so clearly discovered this secret, Jesus gave him the conspicuous position accorded him in the narrative, saying, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it": "Upon this mutual acknowledgment by which thou dost discern and own me as thy Lord, and by which I recognize and accept thee as my disciple, I will rear the structure of my spiritual temple; and I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

Any man has ability to unlock the kingdom and discover the superlative glory when his soul is filled with the ecstasy awakened by a true vision of the Christ, and when he is conscious of at all times and under all circumstances owning his Lord and being owned by him. It is the invisible church, the spiritual temple that rests upon the impregnable basis of a reciprocal recognition between Christ and his own. It is this that binds on earth and binds in heaven. He that possesses this need not to puzzle himself with theological dogmas that he may interpret the meaning of his Lord, for this will admit him into the deepest and sweetest mysteries of that kingdom of which, from this time, he speaks so much, both by precept and parable.

If from the study of this Sunday school lesson, of which the text is the "golden" one, our great army of young people shall march forward with some such vision as that which flashed upon the spirit of Peter,

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the world will be startled by the amazing progress of religious truth and of holy living.

What is needed is not that men shall know Christ by merely intellectual processes, but by that higher revelation which flesh and blood cannot give, but which is the gift of the Father in heaven.

## LESSON FOR JULY 24

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### THE TRANSFIGURATION

GOLDEN TEXT: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."—Matt. 17. 5.

BY BERTRAND MARTIN TIPPLE, D.D.

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THIS was an introduction worth having: "Behold a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Mr. Lowell once listened to the New England philosopher and reported: "Emerson's oration was more disjointed than usual, even with him. It began nowhere and ended everywhere, and yet, as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way, something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of stars. He boggled, he lost his place, he had to put his glasses on; but it was as if a creature from some other, fairer world had lost his way in our fogs, and it was *our* fault, not his." Reading afresh the accounts of the Transfiguration, these words of Lowell came to mind. Not that there is any great similarity between the two incidents, and yet there is just enough to make the one suggestive of the other. The Transfiguration defies analysis. It is mystical rather than methodical. It is not an avalanche of logic, it is a flood of light. The outlines are indistinct, but "the trailing clouds of glory" are everywhere. We are unable to divide and subdivide it, but we feel that something beautiful has passed that way, something even more beautiful than "the rising and setting of stars."

I. *The Interruption of Peter.* "While he [Peter] was yet speaking, . . . behold, a voice out of the cloud." Peter was interrupted right in the midst of

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his speech, but he deserved to be interrupted, for he was talking foolishly. For instance, it is reported that he said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

1. Tabernacles. What did Moses and Elijah want of a tabernacle? They didn't want anything—the idea is grotesque. And as for Christ, certainly his further mission was not in a tabernacle, shut away from the crowds. There was a poor boy down under the hill waiting for him. Too often we have done just what Peter wanted to do, but didn't do. We have built up a tabernacle about Christ and isolated him from the multitudes. No, that is hardly a true statement of the case. We have built the tabernacle only to discover that Christ could not be confined within walls. The result has been that we isolated not Christ but the tabernacle.

2. "Peter said, Lord, it is good for us to be here." Of course it was; it is always good to be where heaven is, and heaven was on that mount. Yes, it was good to be there, good for Peter, but not for that lunatic boy at the foot of the hill. And taking a second thought, it was not even good for Peter to be there *forever*; for one acquires holiness not by removal from the world, but by overcoming the world. "It is action that cleanses, not hiding." Harking back, however, to the main thought of this paragraph: Hope, faith, love, prayer, knowledge, praise have their mountain tops, but those exalted hours are for the valley to revive men there; they are not for selfish enjoyment. "Men must go from praise to being praiseworthy." And "the higher the joy the lower lie its duties."

II. "*A bright cloud overshadowed them.*" A cloud hangs over earth's brightest spot. Even above the Mount of Transfiguration there is not a clear sky. The week previous "began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many

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things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed." A cloud overshadowed them. Early in his ministry Jesus had said to Peter and James and John and the rest, "I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. . . . And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." A cloud overshadowed them. But it was a bright cloud. The light of heaven was shining upon it from above, and "the Light of the World" was shining upon it from below. It was full of glory, it was shot through and through with beams of celestial day. Peter would never forget that the cloud that overshadowed the mountain was a bright cloud. He would go forth to his self-denying ministry and his martyrdom with the glory of that hour flooding all his darkness.

III. "*A voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*"

### 1. Two declarations and a command:

a. "This is my beloved Son." Men had been at some considerable trouble to identify Christ, but after all their trouble they were unable to locate him. Many of them believed that he was a notable character, one who had already figured prominently in the history of Israel, but they were all at sea as to just which one of their big men he was. They made guesses: some said that he was John the Baptist; others held just as stoutly that he was Elijah; and there were those who maintained that he was Jeremiah, or at any rate he was one of the prophets. Now comes the testimony, not of men, but of heaven, declaring that he is the "beloved Son" of God. No more guessing now as to who Jesus of Nazareth is; God hath spoken.

b. "This is my beloved Son, *in whom I am well pleased.*" Peter had not been pleased with him, he had been thoroughly out of sorts with him, particularly since the week before, when Jesus had insisted on going the way of the cross, and also for the message of life had given out this: "Whosoever would save his

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life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." Neither Christ's choice of Calvary nor his creed pleased Peter. Peter had indignantly bolted. But God was pleased. In all the wide land no one was pleased with Jesus, but God was pleased with him. By this time Peter must have reoccupied his former theological position. Something over a week before, in answer to Christ's question, "Who say ye that I am?" Peter had replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was an inspiration given to him by heaven, for Jesus, in his pleased comment on it, says, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." Peter was far from comprehending all that was implied in his pronouncement, but he said it and believed it. Then came the Master's decision that he must proceed unto Jerusalem and die. Immediately the ardor of the disciples cooled, for with his deliberate and determined acceptance of the cross the achievement of the Messiahship, as they saw it, was rendered impossible. Now comes the statement of God, "This is my beloved Son"—the Messiah—"in whom I am well pleased"—the cross. Messiah and cross are declared one and inseparable by no less authority than Jehovah himself. And Peter with joy unspeakable and full of glory reaffirms his faith.

c. "Hear ye him." At first thought this injunction seems superfluous. "Hear ye him"? To be sure they will hear him from this time forth and for evermore. After what they have just witnessed on that mount they can never again be indifferent to his faintest whisper. Moses, dead ten hundred years, makes a celestial journey to point out on the mount Jesus as the inspirer of those ancient laws carved on the tablets of stone. Elijah reappears to acclaim Christ the fulfillment of that truth back to which he strove to lead Israel in the memorably sad days of her apostasy. "And he was transfigured before them; and his face

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did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light." "Hear ye him"? Could they fail to heed him after beholding him the center of such a glory as flooded that hilltop? And yet God speaks. Added to all the rest is the voice of the Eternal. He will leave nothing undone that can be done. He will make it so plain that no one need err therein. Radiant clouds and redeemed saints and white lights are suggestive, but that there may be left no possibility for mistake, God's own voice soundeth, "Hear ye him"!

It will be noticed that God puts his word in the form of a command. Not "Will you hear him?" nor "It will be well to hear him," nor "Hear him if possible," but "Hear him"! They are not left any option in the matter. God's imperative rings out. The thing at hand cannot be trifled with. It was always worth while to hear Jesus. He never preached a poor sermon, he never spoke lightly nor listlessly. Listening to him one was sure to be enlightened and quickened. His speech invariably excelled the speech of men. But now, even for him, it is an unusual time. For him and for them it is the life or death of that action which God within the shadows of Eden promised should be wrought out—the redemption of the world. Christ hath announced his theme for the last days—the cross. He hath partly explained and he will more fully explain its meaning and its necessity. "Hear ye him." God approves his choice of Golgotha. In the wisdom of the Almighty there is none other way by which the coveted goal can be gained. "Hear ye him." Heaven hath sent her emissaries to the mount to apprise Peter and James and John that she awaits anxiously the outcome.

2. And they heard him. What was it they heard? "The cross—the cross—the cross." Peter besought Christ to spare himself. Christ spurned the suggestion, denominating it the temptation of the devil. He says, "I must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be killed." The *must* is imperative. The

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cross is the only way to his eternal priesthood. Descending from the mountain, he pays the temple tax. But it was not obligatory. He might have claimed exemption. Instead, he meekly pays it, and in so doing he "drove the cross straight through the spirit that grasps its right." If a man would become his disciple, he must "deny himself, and take up his cross." He must take up the cross not merely as an object of faith but as a principle of life. To the sons of Zebedee he shows that thrones of glory are on the other side of his cup of anguish and his baptism of blood. If they would reign, they must drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism. "Living to serve and dying to save, that is the way to thrones in his kingdom." The cross—the cross—always the cross. "In the same night that he was betrayed, he took bread: and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you." The cross—the cross. Supper ended, he girds himself with a towel and washes the disciples' feet. The cross—the cross. Right at the journey's end, during the Feast of the Passover, the Greeks appear, saying, "We would see Jesus." Nothing in all his ministry stirred him more powerfully than the coming of those Greeks. For a moment he was swept by a vision of the multitudes of the earth, out of every race and clime, gathering to him. But central in that vision was the cross. For he saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." The cross—the cross—always the cross. "Hear ye him." "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." Do we hear him? Do we hear him? The cross—the cross—always the cross. "Beneath its rugged weight men rise, behind its stern expression they find the secret of peace, and through its agony they enter into bliss. Men lie down to die and awake to life; they clasp a cross and find a crown."

## LESSON FOR JULY 31

### A LESSON ON FORGIVENESS

GOLDEN TEXT: "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."—Matt. 6. 14.

#### THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

BY W. D. CHERINGTON, D.D.

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THE message that we bring seeks to reflect and to emphasize the lesson on forgiveness in Matt. 18. 21-35. The story of this lesson illustrates the truth that

the love of God is broader  
Than the measure of man's mind.

Peter was a disciple of the Saviour. He had made the personal discovery of the love that forgives. But the measuring lines of his forgiving love fell far short of the Saviour's standard. He had been familiar with the Jewish forgiveness, which was exhausted with the third offense. He knew that the forgiveness inspired by Christian love was broader than this. So he doubled the Jewish standard and added yet one more, to make it a perfect number, and pushed up to Jesus with the question, "Until seven times?" O, his little narrow vision must have been surprised when he heard the Saviour's answer, in mathematical terms that signified perfection in infinite fullness—"Until seventy times seven."

Then the story tells us of a certain king who, though at first severe, had later learned the application of the law of love in business, that enabled him to show mercy to an unfortunate servant in forgiving him the great debt of ten thousand talents. This large sum, signifying fifteen millions of dollars, was impossible

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for the servant ever to pay, and he could only cast himself upon the mercy of the king, who in his great compassion forgave him. In this we see a picture of the sinner, burdened with a debt that he can never pay, but which our compassionate Saviour forgives. But the man who was thus abundantly forgiven was utterly unwilling to recognize that his forgiving love must be extended to others. He at once proceeded with the most unwarranted oppression against one of his servants for the paltry debt of a hundred pence (about fifteen dollars). In this he forfeited all his claims to leniency and mercy, and was remanded to the severe ordeal of justice. The moral of the story is that our Father will not forgive us unless we forgive others. And if by virtue of any temporary sincerity we should secure a grant of God's forgiveness, the subsequent backsliding of the human heart that makes it unforgiving toward others violates the fundamental conditions and cancels all the value of God's forgiveness toward us. The written law of forgiving love is clearly voiced through the ages: "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

In this story also do we behold the narrowness of human selfishness that could not forgive a hundred pence, when human love proffered to forgive ten thousand talents, while the love of God sent the beloved Son all the way from heaven to Calvary to bring to our lost world the great redemption that should herald to us God's perfect forgiveness and release from all sin.

"Forgiveness" is the key word in the plan of salvation. In the current thought of the world all the manifestations of divine mercy to our lost race are marshaled under the banner of "Love." The banner of love waves over all the worlds in God's vast creation as the expression of the divine goodness to all the possible myriads of immortal races that may never have lost the divine image. But it is fair to say that Gethsemane

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and Calvary were never heard of except in a world of sin that needed forgiveness, for the intent of all redemption is to make the forgiveness of sin possible.

Forgiveness is a fine art in the realm of grace that is attained only through the merits of the atonement. "The exceeding great and precious promises" present a cleansing fountain for "the exceeding sinfulness of sin," thus opening the path for our perfect restoration to God. Every penitent sinner, in his plea with God for pardon, is reinforced by "the speaking blood of the slain Lamb," which forever cries, "Father, forgive them."

Human forgiveness follows the same law. It is the crystallization of the love of God in human hearts. It is the bridge of grace that spans the deepest gulfs of discord and of alienation. "If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. . . . But love ye your enemies, and do good, . . . and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." The highest accomplishment in all the realm of grace is the ability to forgive. Love that proceeds only along lines of mutual benefit, or along "lines of least resistance," makes no proof of its Christian character. The triumph of the love of God to our lost race, and the triumph of Christian love in human hearts, must find the most perfect culmination in the forgiveness of sin and the reconciliation of enemies.

That we may secure God's pardon it is essential that we should have the penitent spirit that will plead with God for forgiveness. An old legend relates the arrival of many penitent souls at the throne of God, whom he admitted to heaven. Satan was there to interpose this objection: "These souls have offended against thee a thousand times; I, only once." But the answer of the Saviour quickly came to the adversary: "Hast thou ever asked forgiveness?" Most people in their impeni-

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tence have never yet asked forgiveness even up to the narrow Jewish limit of three. Much less would they ever multiply their contrition to the Saviour's fuller standard of "seventy times seven." But the place where men falter and fail to secure God's pardon is in their unwillingness to "forgive those who trespass against them." The pride of the human heart is unwilling to be repentant even toward God, against whom men have no grievance. But it requires heroic grace for a proud, selfish sinner to acknowledge his wrongs to his neighbor, or to forgive his neighbor for his wrongs to him. Yet our omniscient God is a "discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart," and any human unforgiveness harbored in the soul is an impassable barrier between that life and God's pardon.

Calvary is the great redemption center, where earth and heaven must forever meet, that the forgiveness of sin may be realized. Proceeding from Calvary is the twofold intercession, of the beloved Son in heaven and the Holy Spirit on the earth, each pleading the merits of the Saviour's atonement as the one door of hope for the forgiveness of sin. It needed not that the ascended Lord should "ever live to make intercession for us," that our Father might be made willing to forgive us, but that rather the plea of the atoning merit of Calvary's sacrifice in our behalf might prevail in heaven's high and holy court to make sin itself forgivable. But O, it needed and must forever need the intercession of the Holy Spirit in human hearts to incline them to repentance, and to create in them the broken spirit that will cry unto God for forgiveness, and will make full proof of the sincerity of their plea by their readiness to forgive others.

The culmination of all bravery is the forgiving spirit. There are critical times in history when brave men are needed for the holy wars of freedom and righteousness. But it is easier to enlist a hundred thousand men for the battlefield than to find a little band of a hundred

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brave men inspired with the Saviour's spirit to forgive, even when the strife is over. It is significant that in this land of gospel light, though more than a generation has passed since the civil war, the very churches separated by sectional strife have not yet been able through these long years to attain unto the perfect forgiveness of unity.

In personal life men pride themselves upon the stalwartness of their contentions. But it is the gentleness of God that makes men truly great. History records that when John Wesley had a misunderstanding with one of his traveling companions, that threatened their separation, Wesley said to him, "Will you ask my pardon?" only to receive the abrupt answer, "No." "Then," said Wesley, "I will ask yours." This touched his companion's heart in tenderness, and mutual forgiveness and reconciliation quickly followed. In our human strifes it is usually the one who has committed the least sin who is the most ready to ask forgiveness. And when the heart that is nearest right is brave enough to plead for pardon the very heart of stone will surrender to the nobility of gentleness.

The most sacred circles and relationships in life have constant need of the spirit of mutual forgiveness. No two lives were ever so perfect that their union at God's altar could proceed in happiness independently of this divine law. The unforgiving spirit is the domestic destroyer that has wrecked thousands of happy homes. And there are millions of fathers and mothers, not worthy to be called parents, who are strangers to the law of forgiveness, and whose severity toward their children, untempered with mercy, is like the mildew of death to the young immortal lives intrusted to their care, and whom they are sworn to protect with the tenderest love. May the triumphs of divine grace speed the time when Jesus shall become the universal household Saviour, and when every home of severity shall be conquered by God's gentleness!

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"Trespasses!" "Trespasses!" "Trespasses!" are the keynote cries of the millions of the earth, whose unwillingness to forgive others bars them out forever from the holy realm of God's forgiving love. In the days when the Son of God, veiled in flesh, brushed the borders of the earth he taught men how to pray. The model prayer of the ages he gave us, as the stairway of faith, along which every sincere praying soul might ascend, in the steps clearly marked out by the Saviour, to the higher altitudes of perfect union and communion with our Father. The earlier steps of this divine stairway of the Saviour's prayer for the race seemed easier for the tread of the multitudes. But the step upon which the millions falter and fall is the test of divine pardon, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." 'Tis here that

Men falter where they firmly trod,  
And fall, with all their weight of cares,  
Upon the world's great altar stairs  
That slope through darkness up to God.

May our dying Lord's forgiving love spread its holy contagion through the world until all the trespasses of others against us shall be forgiven and forgotten by the Christlike spirit within us! And may He who has promised to "keep us from falling" strengthen and guide us as we ascend the stairway of his grace, and help us to walk faithfully all the way "in his steps"!

## LESSON FOR AUGUST 7

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### JESUS ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM

GOLDEN TEXT: "Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 19. 14.

BY GEORGE CLARKE PECK, D.D.

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WHO brought these children to Jesus is not definitely affirmed. Yet everybody knows without being told. Fancy the background of the picture filled in with men; no artist would dare sketch such an obvious absurdity. This was the first "mothers' meeting" in the history of the church. Nor was it "called," as we should say, except as the southward movement of the birds is "called," by a common inward voice. Somebody suggested Messiah's name: some eager mother started with her child; and almost before anybody realized what was happening, you have this tender, beautiful tribute of maternal love and desire. It was not a petition for healing, either—though there may have been sick babies among the company. All these mothers asked, according to the narrative of Matthew, was a touch of this new Prophet's hand upon their children's heads, with a good man's blessing. And when, as Mark records, Jesus went so far beyond the mothers' express request as to take the children affectionately up into his arms while he pronounced the coveted blessing, one can imagine what these fond mother-hearts were saying. Some things no woman ever forgets. If this episode made such impression upon the disciples that all of the Synoptists refer to it, what of the women whose children had lain in Jesus's arms? It is only my fancy, of course, but I believe that the company of

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women who followed Jesus to his cross and sepulcher was augmented from among those whose children he had this day caressed.

So much for the picture which it is a thousand pities the early religious artists ignored. Better that they should have diverted a portion of their talent from the portrayal of Madonnas and Crucifixions to this tenderly human scene. So they might at least have helped to teach the world certain lessons it has not yet quite learned.

First, then, the winsomeness of Jesus. One of our modern painters, in representing this text, shows a child holding out eager arms toward Jesus, as a child instinctively does toward a few people, and a few only; as little folks almost invariably did to Abraham Lincoln. Jean Paul Richter once said that he loved God and every little child. Doubtless he was loved by God in return; but it does not follow that the children he loved cried toward his arms. To a few select souls only are those naïve advances made. And unless Jesus had the gift of which I speak—part of the openness he brought from heaven—he would have contented himself with laying his hands upon the children, nor attempted to take them into his arms. Somehow the little folks seemed to know by instinct a thing their elders would only learn by years of chagrin, or laborious process of induction.

Now, I should not like to guarantee the morals of every man to whom innocents hold out their arms. Truth compels the admission that little folks have a most disconcerting way of dispensing their blandishments and confidences. Yet even such admission may not be so damaging as it seems. If, as Jesus once said, the kingdom of heaven lies wider open to certain frank sinners than to some classes of admirable churchmen, why expect the kingdom of children's hearts to be more finical and exclusive? Nay, why not go further and affirm that if the whole truth were known that very

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quality which in the prodigal wins the love of little children may be more than offset to obvious fault—nay, indeed, partake of the very essence of the kingdom. At least this is sure, that we most safely trust our name and friendship to those who are loved by little children. And it quite bears out my conviction as to the heart of Jesus when I see the children climb trustfully into his arms.

But this, of course, implies more—Christ's love of children. Even a dog rarely makes overtures to the wrong person. With strange discernment he commonly selects some lover of pets. Love begets love; and love answers love from everywhere. Herein is love, not that our hearts should answer but that the Divine Heart should ever call. The behavior of these one-time children when Jesus opened his arms was quite as rational and scientific as the responses of a summer field to the sun's caress, or the formulated reactions of chemistry. They—like the rest of us—loved him because he first loved them. He was more than interested, he loved—loved them not merely because of what *he* was, but because of what *they* were; loved with a planetary yet personal affection to which we seldom and then only laboriously attain. Somewhat of the passion he could have lavished upon children of his own had they been granted him; exalted and rarefied by a touch of the infinite fatherliness which brought him to earth—this with what more we may not even reverently say—was in his eye and tone as he held out his arms and said, “Suffer the little children, and forbid them not.”

But there is more than this in the picture. Here, also, is a new estimate, Jesus's estimate of childhood. To love children for what they yet may be is one thing; to love them for what they now are is quite another matter. Here, for example, is the political economist or propagandist. He loves children as national or party assets. By and by the boys will grow up, and

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run his mill or vote his ticket; and the girls will some day be wives, and mothers of more children. I wonder if we of the church have not similarly sinned against childhood. We have rejoiced, to be sure, in large Sunday schools, and have been complacent over generous accessions of child life to the church membership—especially with a view to future contributors and burden-bearers. Upon whom shall our mantle fall unless Elijah take great pains with Elisha? By all means recruits, of course—not so much for the sake of the recruits as for the sake of the army. All of which spirit, though entirely practical and obviously important, is still somewhat less than an interest in children for what they are. An apple blossom is, doubtless, on the way to become an apple; but I think somewhat ails the man who cannot revel in the spring glory of an orchard without thinking of bins and markets. It is fortunate we have not discovered the commercial uses of ripe rose-pods, or we might not half enjoy the splendor of the rose itself. Somehow we are so constituted that the moment we realize the marketable or economic aspects of a flower or a friendship, an experience or a child, we become less interested in any other aspect. It may be that when Jesus held out his arms and bade the children come he was thinking of their contribution to the future of his church. It may be that, like a true economist, he welcomed them as frank assets to his cause. It may be so, but I do not believe it. On the contrary, as I believe, he was paying his tribute to the blossom as such; to the child as a child, with all the play and care-freeness and spontaneity left in.

You will hear mothers say that their children have taught them more than they have ever taught their children. Similarly may it not be true that we need the children in the church quite as much for the wisdom they may teach us as for the lessons we may impart to them? The world grows old too fast when

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it loses the child heart. More and more it needs the children—that it may keep its own heart young.

But this familiar scripture contains still further suggestion. It announces a working truth of gospel method. With the children still clinging to his arms and skirts, Jesus quietly affirmed one of the most revolutionary principles he ever uttered: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Not *heaven*; he was not talking of the future. The kingdom of heaven, as variously announced and described by Jesus, is always an earthly establishment; a practice here of the rule and law of paradise; an organizing of manhood and womanhood into a heavenly society upon earth. The kingdom means a world without courts or policemen; a world without strife or vainglory; a world without uncleanness or anger. It is the "earth of the redemption." And concerning such a kingdom Jesus said that it must be entered "as a little child." In other words, salvation, according to the thought of Jesus, involves a keeping of the child heart in spite of years and tears. Regeneration is the rebirth of the simple unaffected soul of a child. Redemption is the recovery of the child spirit in the man. "Of such"—such as have never lost or have at length recovered the openness and simplicity, the directness and teachability of childhood—"of such is the kingdom of heaven."

What gracious paradox; and how vividly descriptive! We lose so much as we grow up! We forfeit entrance to kingdoms which in earlier years lay as open as the day to our approach. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy" partly in this, that then the world is full of bloom and wonder for us. Any healthy lad lives in delicious expectation of being surprised. There is so much to see and love and admire he lives every waking moment on the *qui vive*. The present he looks for in your mysterious parcel is merely a sample of what he is always expecting—surprise. And nothing the world can do for him will be crueler than to kill that

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piquant expectancy. Who are these modern folks that are tired of living; *blasé*, cynical, surfeited with prosperities or hardened by defeat? who but the men and women that have lost the power of being surprised? To such—not any kingdom at all—not even the kingdom of sensuality. And least of all the kingdom of heaven. “Restore unto me the *joy* of thy salvation,” cried the psalmist. Not the fact of salvation but the thrill of it, its power and joy—this he longed to win back. “Make me a child again,” pleads the dull, stifled heart. For, “of such”—those who “receive the kingdom of God as a little child”; those who are willing to “stand and see the salvation of God”; those who trustfully fling open the doors of their inmost selves to every healing breeze and kindling aspiration—“of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

## LESSON FOR AUGUST 14

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### THE LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

GOLDEN TEXT: "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."—Matt. 19. 30.

### THE MASTER'S SCALE OF RANK AND REWARD

BY GEORGE ALBERT SIMONS, D.D.

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LIKE certain other laconic expressions found in Holy Writ, this enigmatical saying of Christ has passed into popular use. To fully understand its grave import we must recall the two serious conversations which preceded and gave occasion to this utterance, and the illustrative parable which followed it.

Hopefully an impulsive young nobleman approached the Master, presenting himself as a model of morality. With self-congratulatory air he asked, "What lack I yet?" Directly Jesus diagnosed his case: "One thing thou lackest." The Master, loving him, appealed to the ideal and heroic in the young ruler, urging him to sell his all, give to the poor, and become his disciple. But the youth was unequal to the challenge to exchange material for spiritual treasures. Wedded to his wealth, he made the great refusal, and "exceeding sorrowful" he departed.

Hereupon the Master turned to his disciples and very solemnly reflected on the great difficulty a rich man has entering the kingdom of heaven. His words seemed unusually severe, for much astonished the disciples ask, "Who then can be saved?" During the young ruler's interview they had been intensely interested and searchingly introspective listeners. Acting as their spokesman, Peter submits a question which evidently was uppermost in their minds: "Lo, we have

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left all and followed thee; what then shall we have?" In other words: All that you have asked the young nobleman to do we have already done, we have sacrificed our all—what treasure shall be ours in heaven? Humanly speaking those loyal disciples, the very first to leave all and follow him, would truly deserve special rank and reward in the kingdom. Did Christ make any special promise to them?

While not censurable in itself, nevertheless Peter's question exhibited a spirit of presumptuous confidence and self-laudation by its obvious comparison with the nobleman. The Master did not forthwith reprimand what was amiss in the inquiry, but graciously proceeded to respond to the good element in it: "Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." And to this promise the Master added a qualifying pledge, which clarifies the preceding verse: "And every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life." Every one! In the original this word is a very strong expression—*every one whosoever*. Thus Christ offers a common inheritance to all who meet the conditions required. Then comes a small word—"But." That little conjunction seems like a sudden turning in the road, giving another scene and point of view: "But many shall be last that are first; and first that are last."

Ever desirous of making his statements clear, the Master then deftly sketched a picture of a householder who hired laborers for his vineyard at five different times during the day, and when the wages were settled, those who had labored but one hour fared as well as the first who had toiled all day. To this picture, in true artist fashion, the Master added an explanatory title: "So the last shall be first, and the first last."

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But what does this parable of the laborers in the vineyard teach? Bearing in mind that it was occasioned by the mercenary spirit and self-conceit which Peter's question evinced, we clearly see that its purpose was to rebuke and condemn such grasping attitude of mind. Let us not forget that the disciples, in common with many Jews, were expecting a Messiah who should overthrow the Roman legions and reign with universal and everlasting sway, hence were slow to catch the vital teaching of their Master, namely, that his was a spiritual kingdom and not one of this world. The disciples were seriously looking forward to an earthly dominion over which Christ, as the long-expected Messiah, should rule and in which they should share as his immediate associates. Anticipating trophies of conquest and offices of power, they even quarreled among themselves over future possessions and status in the kingdom. Not until the Holy Spirit had come upon them did they discern the spiritual significance of Christ's words and mission.

Furthermore, in this parable of the vineyard with its five sets of laborers receiving a common compensation, the Master obviously aimed at showing that the rewards of heaven are not matters of obligation but of grace. Thus this allegory is not so much a prediction as a warning. Like Æsop's fables and Lincoln's stories, the Master's parables were almost invariably given to point out a simple lesson, hence must not be made to "walk on all fours." Keeping this important principle ever in mind, we shall happily escape the mistakes often made by hair-splitting interpreters and fanciful expositors who give undue prominence to the nonessential phases of this parable, namely, the shilling and the different hours in which the laborers were engaged. When once we catch the one great underlying thought, we shall not ask whether the various hours ought not to signify the different periods of life at which souls are called into his kingdom—childhood,

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youth, manhood, and old age; or whether the Jews are to be understood by those first hired and the Gentiles by those last employed. Remembering Christ's line of thought as it proceeded through the conversations with the young ruler and the disciples, with the parable as a striking illustration of his concluding admonition, we cannot but apprehend the Master's real meaning and application: *Not what shall I have, but what shall I do? Not how long have I served, but with what spirit?*

Christ chose his disciples, the twelve; likewise the seventy. "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you." Out of thousands with whom he had come into contact these had been his choice. He called and trained the twelve for service. And so he has been calling, choosing, and training his coworkers ever since. There has been but one John, one Peter, one Paul, but thousands of disciples not less clearly called and commissioned than the twelve have entered the vineyard and have labored with signal success. The book of Acts has been and still is receiving new chapters. The past hundred years of missionary effort and triumph afford a most illuminating commentary on the Master's prophetic words: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and *greater works than these shall he do.*" Never before in the history of the church have the believers been so numerous, so united, so dead in earnest to evangelize the world, never before has the church soared to such a high altitude of faith! Let those who will, wish that they had lived when the church was launched. Brothers, we are nearer the ultimate conquest of this world for Christ, and are truly privileged to see greater works than those originally called! "The best is yet to be."

To spend and be spent for the Master's cause, actuated by none other motive than his constraining love, regardless of rank and reward in the church militant

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or church triumphant, is in itself a blessed, present compensation that defies description. There is a legend that one day while Thomas Aquinas was at his devotions in the chapel the Saviour appeared to him and said: "Thomas, thou hast written much and well concerning me. What reward shall I give thee for thy work?" Aquinas answered: "*Nihil nisi te, Domine*"— "Nothing but thyself, O Lord!" To be such a coworker with Christ already confers royal rank. What a world of inspiration and satisfaction there is in the thought: I am working with and for the King of kings! Born of God, a coworker with Christ, and conscious of his citizenship in heaven, the Christian enjoys the distinction and felicity of the highest possible rank that mortal man can covet. But there are Christians and Christians, first-class and last-class Christians, as we might want to characterize them. One cannot con the pages of Christian biography, or history in general, without finding how from time immemorial God has been pleased to use "chosen vessels," and that there has been a survival of the fittest even among his children here below. Those "of whom the world was not worthy" were characters of clear vision and a passion to actualize their ideal of righteousness. And so there are great men and true in the church universal to-day whom we generously accord first place in the front ranks. But is our judgment as to who is one of the *first* the judgment of Christ? His all-seeing eye may rest upon some obscure souls "to fortune and to fame unknown." Some day when we shall read the pages of history as written by the recording angel in the Eternal Hall of Fame, our eyes may fall upon some names that were known only to the King of Glory. Among the survival of the fittest in yonder kingdom will be found those who were great by virtue of being least. "For he that is least among you all, the same is great."

Will there be degrees of rank and differences of re-

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ward in heaven? Will heaven be a great regal court, somewhat like our largest convention halls, only a thousand or million times greater, with the great white throne and the best places near at hand reserved for the King and his elect? In spite of the apocalyptic pictures which John has given us of heaven, we are not to accept the descriptions literally, but remember the deep spiritual meaning hidden in the symbolic language employed. "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Paul's expression, "to depart and to be with Christ," settles the matter for us. "*To be with Christ,*" whether at close or far range, that will be heaven for you and for me. That will be rank and reward enough for us unworthy servants! To see him in his ineffable beauty, to be like him, to be forever with him, will be the common inheritance of all whose names are in the Lamb's book of life. Who will be the first, the last? He knows!

Rank and reward, to be first or last, are questions that do not concern the true followers of Christ. We are not to judge our fellow Christians or ourselves by standards of rank, office, talent, reputation, enthusiasm, and "bringing things to pass." Judged in the light of these things you and I may be accorded first place, and still the unerring Searcher of men's motives might find us sadly wanting in spite of our abundant labors. "Many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

## LESSON FOR AUGUST 21

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### JESUS NEARING JERUSALEM

GOLDEN TEXT: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." —Matt. 20. 28.

BY WILLIAM F. ANDERSON, D.D., LL.D.

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THE divine standards are ever bringing us the ultimatum of all truth. Since the beginning of human history there has been much speculation and argumentation as to what constitutes true greatness. Jesus Christ has settled the question for all time. We have here:

I. A new standard of measurement for the lives of men. What a transformation has taken place since these words were spoken! In the olden time he was the greatest man who was served by the largest number. The ancient world estimated the greatness of its leaders by the number of servants at their command. To-day, through the influence of these words, leavening the thought of the world's life, we have an exact reversal of the old-time conditions, and by the consensus of right-thinking people he is the greatest man not who is served by the largest number but who serves the largest number.

In that day, long gone by and never to return, the man of preëminent authority sat in his position the embodiment of power, but the spirit of democracy has played havoc with the doctrine of the divine right of kings. The process, so familiar to the ancient world, of power coming down, little by little, from the ruler to the people has practically become obsolete; that condition also is reversed, and to-day the authority resides with the people and passes from them up to their

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leader, whom they choose as their servant. This is a remarkable transformation indeed. Louis XIV, in his spirit of tyranny, could say, "I am the state." This was the pagan view. Frederick the Great, of Prussia, gave fine expression to the modern and Christian view in that noble utterance, "It is the business of the king to be the chief of the servants of the state!" This is the new standard, and has taken firm hold of the thought and life of Christian civilization, and to-day, without argument, he is conceded to be the greatest who is greatest in service to the cause of human progress and the advancement of the kingdom of God.

The roll call of the world's illustrious men and women is the singling out of those who have devoted themselves to the ideal of service. More and more this standard is to be applied as the years go by. The standard of the Great Teacher is rapidly becoming the universal standard. We have here:

II. The answer to the question well-nigh universal in the minds of the ambitious youth of every age. Most of us enter upon the years with this query, "What am I going to get out of life?" But the man who concerns himself chiefly with the question as to what he is going to get out makes a vital blunder. Lying back of the question of what one gets out is that deeper, more fundamental question as to what one is willing to put in. He who is ever asking, "What am I going to get out of life?" gets nothing worth the having. It is a recognized law of investment that a man is likely to take out as profit in proportion as he puts in. Under normal conditions, if he put in largely, he may expect to get out largely; if he put in sparingly, he cannot expect a large return. The same law holds in the realm of the moral and the spiritual. The man who puts in downright earnest moral purpose all that he has to put in, and who keeps putting in as the weeks multiply into the months and months form the years, need not concern himself as to what he will

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get out of life. He will get everything that is worth the having. Upon the basis, then, of the yield of a man's life the text affords us the finality of divine truth.

The divine moral world order was stated with marvelous force and clearness by the Master in the passage, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." To one entirely unfamiliar with the laws of nature it would doubtless seem a reckless thing for the husbandman, after he has safely garnered his grain, to throw it broadcast into the prepared soil. But we have become so familiar with the benign law of the Creator that it seems trite even to refer to it. This is the order in the realm of the spiritual. After a man's life has been made, then it is to be thrown away in the interests of the common weal. Or rather the throwing away of it is the making of it. What a challenge is this to aspiring souls! What a splendid heroism is demanded of the disciple of Jesus Christ! It is by the throwing away of oneself that one finds himself in the truest, deepest sense. In "A Journey to Nature," J. P. Mowbray portrays the life of a typical New York business man who was given up absolutely to the ambition of money-making. On account of the failure of his health it becomes necessary for him to give up Wall Street and betake himself to the country. After a year of country life he describes the result of it in this paradoxical fashion: "I exiled myself to forget myself and I found something—what do you suppose it was? It was myself." This story, as old as the gospel, becomes new in the life of every man who makes the venture of self-effacement for the common good.

III. This demand for service when obeyed gives to a man's life a joy and significance which can be secured in no other way. There is no joy in life like the joy of service. In one of the most beautiful of his little poems Whittier speaks about "the dear delight

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of doing good." He who has not tasted of that delight has been living upon the husks of things. They who spend their lives for others are ever living upon the royal wine of heaven. When God called Abram to go into a far country he gave him a casket containing seven promises: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shall be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

"Thou shall be a blessing"—this was the jewel in the casket. The man who has not tasted the luxury of being a blessing, who has not felt a vital personal relation to some good cause, and that he is of service to his fellow men, has not yet sounded the deeps of life. This must have been in the mind of Browning when he exclaimed upon "the wild joy of living."

There are those, alas! who seem to think that the highest point in life to reach is the point where there is nothing to do, and not a few envy the man who is possessed of so much of this world's goods that he can spend his life in idleness. He is to be pitied rather than to be envied. For the happiest people in the world are not those who have nothing to do, but those who find a task somewhere in the realm of the moral forces and who spend the strength of body, mind, and spirit in the faithful performance of that task with the royal spirit of a child of God. In order to be truly blessed a man must be able to lay to his consciousness very frequently the realization of the accomplishment of something worth while; of something commensurate with the powers with which his Creator has invested him and commensurate with the needs of men about him on every side. Not to be ministered unto, but to minister—this is the mascot for the life of every man who seeks the highest and the best.

Dr. Henry van Dyke has given strong setting to this truth in his suggestive little poem, "The Toiling of

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Felix." In 1897 a piece of papyrus leaf was found at Oxyrhynchus, near the Nile. It bore the fragments of several sayings supposed to be the lost sayings of our Lord. The clearest and most distinct was:

Raise the stone, and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I.

Dr. van Dyke has made the historic incident the occasion of the writing of a very significant little poem which exalts the dignity of labor. Felix, a young Egyptian, very early in his life is mastered by a longing for a revelation of the divine glory. In quest of it he goes to the libraries, takes down the volumes which contain the creeds, studies them long and patiently in hope that while he studies the divine glory will burst from out the sacred page. But after weary months of experimenting he concludes that he has not adopted the right method.

Now he turns away from the libraries and frequents the sacred temples where men are wont to gather for worship. In the early morning and in the evening twilight he becomes a suppliant before the throne of heaven, at the altar of many a sacred fane.

"Hear me, O thou mighty Master," from the altar step he cried;

"Let my one desire be granted, let my hope be satisfied!"

But after other weary months of seeking he is again disappointed.

Now he is told that yonder on the desert is a monastery and in that monastery is an aged saint who has meditated long and patiently on the deepest problems of life; that once a year the aged saint comes from out his lonely dwelling and gives his blessing to the individual whom he happens to meet. Felix places himself at the outer wall. One morning he sees the gate open. He presents himself as a suppliant and entreats the blessing of the aged one, who looks at him earnestly but only in silence. He takes a token, however, from his garments and handing it to Felix retires within the monastery. Felix is again disappointed. But as he

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turns away it occurs to him that there may be something upon this token. He opens and reads:

Raise the stone, and thou shalt find me; cleave the wood, and there am I.

As he wonders what it all means he hears the echo of the hammers of the workmen who are engaged in quarrying out the stone in a stone quarry near at hand. Meantime an inner voice begins to plead with him and to suggest that he must become one of those workmen, and that by the rugged road of toil he will find his way to a vision of the divine glory. The voice pleads so earnestly that at last he heeds it and presents himself, is accepted, and begins to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. At the end of the first day a new zest has come into his life. This grows on him as the days come and go. He is sure now he is on the right road. One day a fellow workman is overcome by the burning rays of the noonday sun. In natural compassion Felix shelters his head with a palm leaf and while doing so it seems to him he catches the vision of a face of wondrous beauty. Another day they are transporting some building material across a stream of water; the workman who stands by his side loses his footing and falls into the stream. In a moment Felix has plunged in after him. Firmly grappling him in one arm, he makes his way to shore with the other, and while he struggles toward the place of safety it seems to him that he sees a form walking on the surface of the water like unto the divine form of the Son of God. Thus he finds the way to a fellowship with his Lord that is deep and rich, sweet and glorious and divine.

The spirit of the teaching of the little poem is thus beautifully summed up by the author:

This is the gospel of labor—ring it, ye bells of the kirk—  
The Lord of Love came down from above, to live with the men  
who work.

This is the rose that he planted, here in the thorn-cursed soil—  
Heaven is blest with perfect rest, but the blessing of Earth  
is toil.

## LESSON FOR AUGUST 28

### JESUS ENTERING JERUSALEM

GOLDEN TEXT: "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." —Matt. 21. 9.

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THE entry into the city which develops into a jubilant procession and provokes the cheering of the text was planned by Jesus. That is the most significant fact in regard to it. He refuses to chill the enthusiasm of his followers and says in substance, according to Luke 19. 40, that the recognition of his royal dignity was inevitable. The whole event is made, by his attitude, a claim of Messiahship, a claim not audible but visible, the very method of it making it vivid and impressive.

But the triumphal entry, with its striking combination of majesty and lowness, is no new claim. It is rather the dramatic climax to an assertion of kingship which runs all through his life, sometimes taking definite form, as with the woman at Jacob's well, but oftener heard in a royal tone which is characteristic of his teaching. He declares himself to be absolutely necessary to man's life, to his progress, to his future. He is light, life, and Lord to men. He can give freedom, peace, and glory. He is the head of the kingdom, Lord of angels, giver of the Spirit, arbiter of destiny. These claims are not occasional but constant. They are not incidental in his speech, having no necessary connection with his message. They rather belong to the essence of his message. He never attempted to exalt the truth for which he stood as sponsor and obliterate himself from view. Quite the reverse. Other leaders have done that, and we honor them for their humil-

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ity. Jesus did not do it, and it is impossible to find anything offensive in his self-assertion. To say, as has been said, that the claim of Messiahship would have injured his modesty, and consequently cannot have been made, is to assume a right of judgment which does not belong to damaged souls. The place and limits of modesty are to be determined by Him whose moral consciousness has in it no cloud. He alone can decide the methods necessary to the fulfillment of his mighty mission, and he can be trusted to honor all the demands of consistency. Whatever our interpretation of the fact may be, it is undeniable that by definite assertion, by the relationships to human souls he assumed for himself, by the royal bearing suggested by his authoritative attitude, by the royal tone which sounds through all his teachings, he claimed to be King.

Is the claim warranted? Yes, if it is true. It is motive which decides the moral quality of self-assertion. When a coal baron declares that his voice is that of Providence, when a great king says, "I am the state," when a Roman Cæsar accepts divine honors decreed for him by a servile senate, these are clear cases of swelling vanity. And nothing is more offensive than "obtrusive self-appreciation." But it is very plain that the purpose of Jesus in the claims he makes concerning himself is not mere insistence on his personal dignity. He is not anxious about his reputation. He is often anxious to avoid public notice. When, then, he is eager to have men correct in their estimates concerning him it is not a sign of vanity. It is rather proof of fidelity. When he asks at Cæsarea Philippi, "Who do men say that I am?" "Who do ye say that I am?" the words are not the words of an egotist famishing for praise, they are the words of a minister hungry to serve.

In his claims he is trying to make clear his relationships and functions. His equipment makes it possible for him to give rest to the weary, living water to the

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thirsty, bread to the hungry, light to the darkened, life to the dead. His whole spiritual force is available for others. The spiritual recovery and spiritual development of men is the task set him. He knew his task, was always consciously in the presence of it, and knew with equal certainty the methods necessary to its accomplishment. One necessity of men would be that they should know him—the innermost truth about him—and the other necessity would be that they should receive him. They could not know him except through his self-manifestation. Neither the splendor of his person nor the nature of his mission could be left to human inference. His astonishing claims are not only allowable, they are necessary. It was absolutely vital to men that they secure proper measurements of him and attain a proper attitude toward him. They could not estimate him aright without knowledge of his nature and function. They could not have the knowledge without his self-disclosure. Greatness may be, and usually is, silent about itself, but greatness appealed to by need cannot be thus silent if speech is necessary to meet the need. If there be any unity of purpose in Christ's ministry, then his self-advertisement must be a necessary element in his mission. Let us repeat that he was always in the presence of a task. His first recorded words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" show its early appeal. His last words on the cross, "It is finished," show its accomplishment. Part of his contented retrospect was, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." He had a mission, never deserted it, never lost sight of it. He was working at it when he taught, when he healed, when he died. Then assuredly he was busy at it when he directed attention to himself, when he asked for supreme devotion, when he assumed authoritative direction of men's lives, when he fascinated men and made them dependent upon his presence, when he promised

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them in their grief that he would not leave them orphans but would come to them and stay. All his teaching about himself was to him a vital part of his message, and if men now ignore his witness concerning himself, or empty it of the meanings with which he packed it when he made himself vitally necessary to souls, they assail his wisdom and invalidate his total message. He was no more emphatic about the Father or the kingdom than about himself. If his emphasis be wrong in the one case it may be equally wrong in the other cases. His claims warranted? Yes, let it be said again, if they are true. Let us say further that those claims are part of his response to the orders of God and to the needs of men.

But are the claims true? "Art thou a king?" Pilate's query was incredulous. Is ours? Did Jesus idealize himself? Brierley calls attention to the part played in literary achievement and in social intercourse by what Keats called "negative capability." This is simply the ability, useful sometimes, to ignore dark things. Did Jesus exercise that kind of power and practice that habit in regard to himself? Did he simply shut his eyes to defects in his character and equipment when he asserted his royalty? That is equivalent to asking, "Was he sincere?" But the notion of Christ as a deceiver is not only abhorrent, it is grotesque. Sincerity is a quality which may belong to all souls whom the good God has made, but a great man cannot be without it. Carlyle was surely right in that conclusion. Sincerity must be admitted as partial explanation of all permanent greatness. It is absurd even to hint that an empire like that of Jesus Christ is built upon fraud. Given the sinless consciousness of Christ, deceit is ruled out as a method of explaining his claims. But if not a deceiver was he not in the grip of a wild fancy? Now, we should note that a spotless life and spotless consciousness are warrants against delusion. Of course, goodness is no sure de-

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fense against faulty judgment. A saint may be intellectually muddled. But sinlessness in its negative and positive meanings—the absence of sin in the soul's interior and the absence of neglect or failure in the soul's endeavors—presupposes mental soundness. It must be psychologically true that sinlessness and sanity go together. So that the pure life of Jesus assures us not only that he believed himself to be what he announced himself to be, but that *he was* what he announced himself to be. His words concerning himself were not only truthful, they were true. His self-estimates may be relied upon. And to the assurance which comes to us from his character may be added the confirmations of history. Intellectual deliverances, social glories, spiritual triumphs all through the centuries gather themselves into an ever-lengthening and overwhelmingly impressive procession and cry aloud, "Hosanna! Blessed is the King!"

But if his claim of kingship is true what is our response? Carlyle said "the divine right of kings" is a dead doctrine entombed in dusty volumes on dusty shelves. But he reminded us also that there is a germ of truth in the old theory. It ought to be true that kings and all other rulers rule by divine right. There is really nothing that equips a man for rule except divine right. Every crown should have the fiat of God back of it. Real kings are made by him. The king is the man who can. The problem which confronts us in our human governments is how to discover the divinely fitted ruler. And when the king is found, then what? Recognition of his supremacy. The royalty of Jesus is established by the decree of God, and the choice of God has been ratified by the suffrages of innumerable souls who have made themselves the willing captives of his Son. Have we individually bowed to him? To be sure, he reigns in serene majesty without our vote. His throne is secure if we fail to give our adherence. But we are not secure. In kingdoms geograph-

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ical and political we may secure the benefits of the government even if we criticise and disagree with it, but not in the kingdom of God. Our choice of the King is necessary that we may get the blessings of his grace and power. No superficial loyalty will do. There are many who would vote for him rather than for any other religious leader who will not submit to him. They cannot know the glory of his rule. There are some who accept his message and ignore him. But his message with himself omitted from it ceases to be a gospel. To listen to him as a teacher or even to imitate him as an example will not suffice. To stop with such attitudes is to miss his conception of his function. He is a gift, a mediator, a way. He is to be accepted, trusted, followed, loved, obeyed. Men are to wear his yoke, acknowledge his mastery, observe an ordinance as a memorial to him. Those who trust him are commended. Those who give any human loved ones precedence and make him secondary are rebuked. Those who reject him will nevertheless at last be judged by him. He sifts claims, reads character, determines destiny. Do we adore and submit?

In that triumphal procession when the people cried "Hosanna," he deliberately gave opportunity to men to acknowledge his lordship. And every day to all souls who see and hear him the same opportunity is given. To admit his claims and then refuse him homage is to be guilty of a gross contradiction. Are we thus guilty?

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 4

TWO PARABLES OF JUDGMENT

GOLDEN TEXT: "Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you."—Matt. 21. 43.

THE KINGDOM TAKEN AWAY

BY SAMUEL MONROE VAN SANT, B.D.

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THE scene of the text is the temple at Jerusalem. It is Jesus's last day of public teaching. In this same temple twenty-one years before he talked learnedly with the doctors—a boy of twelve. Perhaps in his audience to-day are some who sat in that former group. Then they listened with wonder, as they stroked their beards and exchanged approving nods and glances. But now hatred fills their hearts and is ill concealed. Then he was a prodigy, now he is a peril. Therefore those darkly flashing eyes and those muttered threats of violence while he speaks.

In the parable of the wicked husbandmen Christ portrays in telling fashion the relation of the Jewish hierarchy to his kingdom. Strange that they did not at once recognize the picture. Before they are aware they have pronounced sentence against themselves. Or, it may have been that, understanding well enough, they pretended not to catch Christ's meaning, hoping thereby to draw from him some incriminating word. "When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" asks Jesus. They answer, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." Whether or not this answer was a snare to entrap the Master, they themselves are caught, for his next utterance leaves no doubt as to the application

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of the parable. "Therefore, I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Stung by his words, they hiss one to another, "He means us. Kill him. And yet we dare not, for if we do, the people will kill us."

Christ's judgment against Israel proclaims a general principle of the divine method. Like so many of his sayings, it has a world-wide, ages-long application. Over and over again the neglect of privilege and the abuse of power have furnished the "Therefore," and judgment has followed. The kingdom has been taken away. To nations and to individuals God says, of every kingdom of opportunity which his Providence sets before them, "Use it, or lose it."

This sentence against the Jewish nation was speedily fulfilled. Indeed, almost before that generation to whom he spoke had passed away, her ancient capital, so long a synonym of national glory and greatness, was overthrown, and to-day, her children scattered to the ends of the earth, Israel as a nation is but a memory and a hope.

But sadder still than her temporal ruin was the loss of leadership in the spiritual empire which Christ came to found. It seems severe to say that Judaism is an inconsiderable religious force in the world to-day. But whatever religious influence it does exert is due almost wholly to the glory of its ancient history and the abiding influence of those great truths and great names which God gave to the world through his chosen people, while preparing the way for the dispensation of his divine Son. Judaism to-day is a pathetic ruin, a mere relic of past greatness and glory, though a relic of surpassing and touching interest. An innocent fancy may reflect upon what might have been the later history of Israel and her place among the nations had these rulers acknowledged the Messiahship of Jesus. But they failed in their day of grace, and their house

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is left unto them desolate. The story of the Jews since Christ's day is the story of a lost opportunity. Yet the gloom of the picture is relieved by the clear promise that the people whom Christ chose, but who rejected him, will one day in penitence return and share in the blessings of that kingdom which shall fill the whole earth.

Israel's loss of the kingdom through the blindness and folly of its leaders has been repeated many times in the world's subsequent history. Proud Spain, once so commanding among the nations, has only to be mentioned as an instance of the abuse of power resulting in its loss. The recent Turkish revolution which swept from his throne the unspeakable Abdul Hamid, whose atrocities as sultan have so long shocked the civilized world, is a striking example of a kingdom taken away and given to another.

Judaism overthrown, another great religious hierarchy, in course of time, came to dominate the world. Strangely enough, it was an overgrowth or perversion of that very kingdom with which God supplanted Israel. They called it "The Holy Roman Empire." The map of temporal Rome as "mistress of the world" in Jesus's day was small compared with that vaster empire over which spiritual Rome wielded its mighty scepter.

But the decline and fall of Cæsar's empire only foreshadowed the loss of Rome's religious supremacy. When her mandate began to "stand between souls and their Father in heaven, to bind grievous burdens heavy to be borne and lay them upon men's shoulders, and multiply forms and observances and obstruct and complicate the way of approach to God"; when her authority began to usurp the place of the "one only Mediator between God and man"—this was the beginning of that abuse of power and privilege which at last lost to Rome its scepter of spiritual leadership.

The "prisoner of the Vatican," as the Pope is pathet-

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ically described to-day, is in marked contrast with his mediæval predecessor, the mighty Gregory VII, who, as head of the church on earth, made and unmade kings, dictated the policies of nations, and wielded sway over the bodies and souls of men. Rome is no longer the world's religious center, nor does the so-called successor of Saint Peter longer wield the scepter of religious leadership. The map of the world to-day shows that leadership committed to Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. The followers of Luther, Calvin, and Wesley have received the kingdom. Why? Because they struck the fetters from God's Word, proclaimed liberty of conscience, the priesthood of all believers, the oneness of all true followers of Christ of whatever sect or name. If they, too, prove unworthy, and betray their sacred trust, then surely will the kingdom pass from their hands and be given to others.

Is there not in this parable a lesson for our own America? What favored Israel was in the ancient world, America is among the nations of to-day. Every crisis in our history shows the guiding, protecting hand of God. "He hath not dealt so with any nation." By strange leadings, we have just emerged from a comfortable isolation to meet the responsibilities of a great world power. Grave problems, social, industrial, political, moral, must be solved at home. Vast moral obligations front us as we look abroad. An opportunity for leadership among the nations which shall mean the material and moral uplift of countless millions, and the hastening by centuries of the millennium of Christian civilization, is ours to-day. Shall we be true to this opportunity? As Israel's abuse of high privilege brought national humiliation and ruin, so surely, if we neglect or abuse the unexampled privileges which are ours as a people, will the kingdom be taken from us and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

'As with nations so with men. Life itself is a king-

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dom. Every day has its throne of power, its call to usefulness. None need stand in the market places, saying, "No man hath hired us." Not a day passes but the Master says, "Go work to-day in my vineyard." Every rising sun shines on whitened fields. Every setting sun should cast his farewell glow upon some gathered harvest.

It is possible to cultivate that moral alertness which quickly sees the open door and with sublime faith and dauntless courage presses forward. But how many are as prodigal of opportunity and blind to their privileges as these Jewish rulers were to theirs! The old story of Hannibal is often exemplified. When he could have taken Rome he would not, and when he would he could not. The historian tells us, "One winter in Capua brought about a ruin which the snows of the Alps, the suns of Italy, the treachery of the Gauls, and the powers of the Romans failed to accomplish."

Many a Hannibal is wintering luxuriously in Capua while his opportunities for conspicuous service for God and humanity are slipping away never to return. One of the sad pictures we must often see is a young man frittering away splendid educational advantages, or some fine business chance provided by a self-sacrificing father or friend. The close of every college term or business year sees many such pictures. A prize lost, a kingdom gone forever!

Public office is an opportunity, and there are men who justify the faith reposed in them by a conscientious discharge of duty and an unselfish devotion to the best interests of the people. Yet few cities and commonwealths have escaped disgrace at the hands of men who have used their high office for the most sordid ends, shamelessly indifferent to any service they owe the people. But such sooner or later must come to grief. A most hopeful sign in this age of official roguery and corruption is that so many offenders of

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high and low degree have gone down to political defeat and social disgrace and dishonored graves, if not to prison cells, under the scourge of the roused indignation of the people.

The home is a kingdom of opportunity. So is a man's business; and for his manner of conducting it and his use of its gains he will be called to give an account. The same is true of the privileges of the church, with its needy causes, its calls to self-denying service. The question, so often asked, "Dare I, with my small abilities, undertake this important task?" should, oftener than it does, give way to this other and more solemn question, "Dare I refuse this task to which I am called, and so risk its remaining undone or falling into even weaker hands than mine?"

The picture of the text is that of the kingdom taken away as a judgment upon unfaithfulness. Consider for a moment the reward which follows a wise improvement of opportunity. That reward is a yet larger opportunity. "Faithful over a few things, ruler over many things." The greatest opportunity is Christ's personal call to accept and serve him. To possess him is to possess a kingdom, among whose blessings are pardon, peace, purity, sonship with God, and life eternal begun here and now. How dare men refuse? For the rejecter of Christ shall himself be rejected by Christ when from the throne of judgment he shall say, "Depart, I never knew you!"

A young man lay dying in one of our city hospitals, an early wreck through dissipation. Seeing his lips move, the attendant bent over him and found him repeating, "I've missed it! I've missed it!" "What have you missed?" he was asked. "O, I've missed heaven! I've missed heaven at last!"

To refuse Christ and the privileges of his service here is to lose ■ heavenly kingdom and a fadeless crown.

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 11

THE KING'S MARRIAGE FEAST

GOLDEN TEXT: "Many are called, but few are chosen."—  
Matt. 22. 14.

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THIS is an enigmatical text if we forget or disregard the context. It has been oft quoted as a solemn and conclusive proof-text of an impossible doctrine. These words form the concluding sentence of a very beautiful and impressive parable. They are as much a part of the parable as the apple is a part of the tree. The apple cannot be explained without the tree, no more can this text be understood without reference to the tree on which it grew.

The amazing blessings of the gospel are set forth under the similitude of a great king who generously invites large numbers of his subjects to the nuptials of his son. The surprise and indignation of the king at the indifferent, flippant, and murderous refusal of the invited guests to appear at the feast leads him to take extreme measures. The assassination of the servants bearing a gracious invitation is answered by devastating armies, which put the murderers to the sword and reduce their cities to ashes. Other servants are now sent forth to invite the first folks they meet to the marriage feast, wheresoever and howsoever they may live. This time there is no hesitation. The banqueting halls are soon filled with a miscellaneous but happy throng. One man is so fearful that the jostling crowd will leave no room for him at the tables that he does not wait to don the wedding garment, generously provided by the host on such an occasion. Clothed in his ragged garments, perhaps with unwashed

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hands and face and uncombed hair, he presumes to sit down with his richly appareled friends and neighbors. It would take only one such guest to spoil any feast. No host would willingly endure such wanton disregard of the proprieties. The intruder is cast into the outer darkness of the night. Turning to his hearers our Lord says, "For many are called, but few are chosen." Joseph Parker says, "Read it this way: Many are called, but few choose; many are invited, but few come; many are named, but few are real."

This, doubtless, is the way our Lord expected his words to be understood. There is not the slightest suggestion that this man was cast out for any avoidable ineligibility. His infelicitous apparel was not necessary or accidental, but the result of deliberate choice. For this reason all the guests, the culprit included, acknowledged the justice of his condemnation.

"Many *are* called." Here there is no possible room for controversy. This king not only sends a widely extended invitation, but exhausts every agency at his command to induce its acceptance. In that ancient day it was customary to give a preliminary invitation and follow this with a special notification when at length the great day had arrived. This had been done. A third announcement that the feast was waiting brought only hilarious mockery from some of the belated guests and murderous reprisals from others. Unwilling to abandon the feast so long as there were any possible guests, a fourth call is issued for any who care to come.

This oft-repeated and widely extended call is characteristic of all our Lord's parables and invitations. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

If a part of the lost were ineligible to salvation it

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is very evident that our Lord did not know it. If he was not making a possible way of salvation for *every* sinner he was self-deceived. He died upon the cross laboring under the hallucination that escape from guilt and doom was within the reach of every immortal spirit. Or, if he uttered the words above quoted knowing that there were myriads of human beings to whom they did not apply, he was guilty of insincerity!

When at last our Lord stood face to face with the great problem of evangelization; when all necessary preliminary steps had been taken and he was about to leave his great work in the hands of his followers, what kind of terms did he employ? Did he commission his disciples to preach a limited atonement? Did he caution them to be particular about telling the good tidings only to the eternally selected few? Did he warn them that under no circumstances was the priceless pearl of salvation to be cast before the predestinated lost? This is what he said: "Go ye therefore, and teach *all* nations." "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to *every creature*." "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached *among all nations*." Could the disciples have inferred from these words that there were some to whom they might not go? The conclusion is irresistible that Jesus intended to offer liberty to every captive, home to every wanderer, pardon to every penitent, eternal life to every believer.

Nowhere has the gospel halted because it was fronted by the nonelect. The door of mercy has always swung open whenever a seeking sinner has stood without. More have not crossed its threshold not because they could not, but because they would not. Christ's bitter lament over doomed Jerusalem is equally applicable to every lost soul: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee under my wings as a hen doth her little ones, but ye would not." Not *could* not, but "*would not*."

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It is also equally true that, while many are called, but few are chosen; that is, few choose to be chosen, few care to take the time and make the sacrifices necessary to be among the chosen. There is nothing in the parable to indicate that this man was excluded because of any inherent defect for which he was not responsible. In all probability he entered the palace in an impudent, swaggering manner, deriding his acquaintances for their careful preparation, declaring that he would sit down at the king's table dressed as he pleased. His speechlessness when accosted by the king shows clearly that he recognized his guilt. He was not among the "chosen" simply because he had not donned the wedding garment.

All of that vast company of ex-slaves who fled in the darkness of night from Egyptian bondage were "called" to enter the promised land. God meant that the tottering patriarch and tottering infant should soon find peace and plenty in the land flowing with milk and honey. That their bones were left to bleach on the desert sands was not God's fault. Their disbelief and disobedience excluded them from the ranks of the "chosen" who crossed the Jordan.

Of the twelve who were "called" to view the promised land only two were "chosen," because of their faith, to pass over with the faithful. All twelve had the same chance. Cowardly hearts excluded them.

Thirty and two thousand were "called" to follow the standard of Gideon, but only a paltry three hundred were "chosen" to share in that unique battle and astonishing victory. You need not be told why the thirty-one thousand and seven hundred were not among the "chosen."

When the startling news was flashed over this country that the Confederate batteries located in Charleston Harbor had fired upon Fort Sumter, President Lincoln, before the echo of those shots had died away, issued a call for seventy-five thousand troops.

## THE KING'S MARRIAGE FEAST

Many who volunteered were too old, others too young, still others were disqualified by various physical defects. Only the fit were "chosen" to fight.

Every fall the colleges of our land "call" young men. Many who respond are not among those "chosen" to remain. Why? Not because of any principle of arbitrary selection, but simply because these young men do not have on the wedding garment of academic preparation.

How can all men be saved if every man does not choose to be saved? It is self-evident that men cannot be saved in their sins, and it is just as certain that a vast throng will not permit themselves to be separated from their sins. Christ died for all. The gospel is sent to all. The banqueting tables have been prepared for all. The wedding garments will be freely given to all. That is as far as divine solicitude can go. God may graciously call all, and one may have as much right and ability to accept as the other, but only those who accept can be "chosen."

Not opportunity, but response to opportunity, marks the difference between men. Many a man fails whose pathway is strewn with fragrant opportunities; another succeeds who seems to be born into a world void of opportunity and whose bleeding footprints can be traced through the briars of difficulty. Not the divine will, for God wills the death of none, but the human will determines every man's salvation or damnation. The only way that God could save some men would be to destroy their power of choice. That would be coercion, not salvation. One man is saved, his neighbor is lost, not because both may not be saved, but because one chooses to be lost.

When a man chooses to do wrong God is at the limit of his resources. Jails and penitentiaries are the final response of society to the men and women who choose to do wrong. The necessity for these somber institutions, with their high walls and grated windows, their

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shuffling-gaited, sad-faced, bitter-hearted men and women, is a suggestive commentary on the perversity of human nature. But what can we do when men and women deliberately choose crime, placing the property and lives of others in constant jeopardy? Incarceration is the only solution. When men despise the opportunities for moral regeneration that God has placed within their reach, when they turn away from the gateway of salvation with a sneer of scorn or oath of defiance upon their lips, infinite love has reached the limit of its resources. The "outer darkness" is the logical termination of such a career.

Bargain hunters may be a modern nuisance, but they are not the product of yesterday. From the beginning there have been searchers after "something for nothing." How to enjoy the fruits without the antecedent labor is always the present problem with multitudes of our race. The guest without the wedding garment believed that he had found the solution. His speechless consternation should be a perpetual warning to all who are tempted to walk in his footsteps.

How many believe that God does not mean exactly what he has said! No doubt this presumptuous guest was warned by the attendants. His neighbors to the right and left urged him to rectify his error, but nothing could disturb his serene indifference. His choice was deliberate, his condemnation just. "Everything will come out all right," "Let us look out for to-day; to-morrow will care for itself," is the specious foundation of many a life. Inspection day comes after a while for us all. God meant you when he said, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Don't believe it? You are not the first man who has walked toward the bottomless pit with wide-open eyes.

## LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 18

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### THREE QUESTIONS

GOLDEN TEXT: "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."—Matt. 22. 21.

BY ROBERT J. TREVORROW

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JESUS CHRIST was a teacher of men. He came into the world for that purpose and he was constantly about that business. Teaching was his primal ambition. Though he overthrew the tables of the money-changers he was not formally a social reformer. Though he frequently performed miracles, he was not by profession a miracle-worker. Though he often healed the sick, he was not a physician. Throughout his entire ministry he was a teacher. And when we say he died to save men from their sins we know that when discourses and parables were ineffective he gave his very life in a terrible agony of suffering to impress upon men's hearts the great spiritual teachings which were his gospel. Whatever else may have been its relation to the atonement, his death is the greatest teaching fact in history. Christ's mission upon earth was the revelation of the truth. And clothed with all possible authority and knowledge, he taught with such definite conviction that whatever he says must be listened to with respect and attention.

It is fortunate that he was a universal teacher—that his subject was the whole science of life. He was ambitious to bring men face to face with all the privileges and principles of the abundant life, and he therefore neglected nothing that could contribute to that end. Upon every essential phase of human conduct there is a statement of some elemental truth, which, faithfully followed, insures success. In spite of

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the tempestuous politics of his time he did not evade the question of Cæsar's right to tribute, and as a result not even the topic of government is omitted from his teaching. Our text, then, is his formula for national prosperity. Nor is it an unimportant subject, for all history echoes with the crash of falling empires. Nothing seems more fragile than a governmental fabric—"The very slave of circumstance and impulse, borne away with every breath." Recent events, without calling upon the wisdom of the past, have taught us that "Our little systems have their day; they have their day and cease to be." Nevertheless we are egotists enough to think ourselves exempt from the universal law and expect the magic of the word "America" to defend us from all harm. Yet we must learn that the answer of Jesus to the crafty Pharisees is the principle which will settle the fate of the American people, for it concerns the essentials of the republic's life—the tribute of the citizen to his government and to his God.

There may be differences of opinion as to what constitutes "the things which are Cæsar's"—as to how far governmental obligations extend—but certainly Cæsar has the right to expect from his citizens an uncompromising loyalty to those constitutional principles for the exercise of which his government was founded. And by this we mean that patriotism is not merely the willingness, in times of national peril, to put on a uniform and be shot at for the sake of public safety—however valiant and brave that may be—but that it is also the maintenance of those great moral ideals which until now have been so important to both the founders and defenders of the American nation. Early American patriotism was distinctly a moral thing—a loyalty to great moral ambitions which almost reached the fervor of a religious crusade. Life in the colonies was pervaded by the influence of those moral principles, and fidelity to them represents very much of the patriotism that fought at Bunker Hill and suffered

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at Valley Forge. Hitherto the immoral has been un-American, and naturalization has had the flavor of moralization. Morality, therefore, occupies a much larger part of Americanism than most people dream of. These great moral influences are the impulses which make Americans out of men. The vital elements of true patriotism are not alone territorial expansion and commercial production, but also those clean moral principles which for so long have been the determining factors of American conduct and for the maintenance of which our forefathers died. The defense of the flag in these times of peace means the protection of these ideals from both the negligent citizen and the loud-mouthed undesirable immigrant.

In the moral war going on—in the defense and preservation of the essential elements of Americanism—there is need to “render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s.” Time, thought, energy, sacrifice for the defense of moral institutions are as important civic necessities as the blue-coated soldier is for physical warfare. These moral institutions, like the New England conscience and (though it be anathema to mention it) the New England Sabbath, have made such contributions to the national character as should put them well within the safety of national protection. Many Americans have yet to learn that the defense of boundaries is subordinate to the making of men—that the chief end of government is the moral integrity of its citizens.

The relation of spiritual truth to political problems is not always clear. Yet Jesus unhesitatingly made personal religion an essential to national success. The reason for this lies in the fact that the problems of the nation are the problems of the individual multiplied. The solution of personal problems is very largely the matter of a pure heart. The counsel to “render unto God the things that are God’s” is of profound importance to the whole commonwealth because in it is to

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be found the solution of its political problems. If all men were good men the general well-being would be less precarious or perplexing. National existence is, after all, a problem of personal evangelism.

The contributions of religion to national life are many and important, and include not only the incentive to the keeping of law, the expansion of the individual into the largest and best life, but the linking of the civic with the religious as a method to coöperate with God in his plan for the regeneration of mankind. These may be accepted as illustrations of a great principle.

One great lesson of modern times is the inability of law to enforce itself. The multitude of offenses handicaps the courts, and the greed of the strong overpowers the weak. There is a declining disposition to obey the mandates of a legislature whose members are often open to serious personal criticism. Nor is an intimate knowledge of the legislative process conducive to reverence for law. This condition, coupled with the inability of public legislation to cover more than the merest fraction of individual activity, has thrown the enforcement of law back upon the citizen as a personal problem. If the individual citizen is not disposed to obey the law he will not be deterred from the breaking thereof by fear of punishment or by respect for the method of its manufacture.

The creation of the disposition to keep the law even at a personal sacrifice may be effected only when the law becomes a sacred thing and is kept as unto God. Modern thinkers are coming by various roads to agree with Jesus that the formula for national prosperity must include religion as well as patriotism. Law to the religionist is always a serious thing, involving important and even sacred duties. When, therefore, public legislation is conceived and enacted in this spirit—as a rendering “unto God the things that are God’s”—the problem of its enforcement will have been

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solved. It may be too much to expect that respect for modern law will ever equal the reverence for that of Sinai, but it is easily seen that the only adequate solution for the growing disregard for law will be attained when the spirit of patriotism and the spirit of religion join hands and as unto God for conscience' sake keep the statutes of the state.

Though every employment has its physical trademarks, a man's occupation interpreted religiously is a divine plan for spiritual development. Work must be rescued from a method of resisting poverty and beatified into a spiritual evolution. The discipline of daily tasks of whatever trade is a latent means of grace. This is true of every profession—for example, the most permanent result of the Emmanuel movement will be to emphasize the religiousness of medicine and to assert that all physicians should be godly men. The performance of the duties of statecraft as they fall upon the average citizen should also be productive of spiritual growth. Obedience to the unseen state is so akin to obedience to the unseen God that there must be some interaction whereby the one strengthens the other. Save the requirements of religion itself, no demand upon human life involves such unrewarded fidelity, such patient self-sacrifice, such unappreciated conscientiousness as the obligations of patriotism.

The development of citizens by the religious performance of public duty is all the more important because of the need of good men, and because in the discharge of the obligations of citizenship there are frequently encountered many temptations which only religion can resist. It not only requires religion nowadays to do honest business, but it also requires religion to be a good citizen. The pursuit of religious ideals creates a spiritual development essential to the proper performance of civic duty.

A further contribution of religion to a republic is the strengthening of loyalty to government because of

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a vision of the plan of God to use the governments of the world for the regeneration of humanity. Surely while the victory of the right still wavers it must be true that "God ne'er dooms to waste the strength he deigns impart." The world's governments are yet to be the evangelists of his gospel. So, whatever a man works at, his labor may become a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. Since "all service ranks the same with God," in church and state and home, then in every department of human experience there is the possibility of serving God directly. Joined with this incentive to service is a clear faith in the divine success. Such powerful motives for the highest and most spiritual performance of commonplace duties must certainly make their contributions toward the solution of the problems of state.

In his answer to the treacherous question Christ's object was not to emphasize the limitations of temporal government for the protection of the individual conscience, but rather to assert the need for the conscientious performance of both civic and religious duties with all possible fervor and fidelity. Jesus did not encourage a separation between patriotism and religion. His ideal for religion was to make it comprehend and influence every detail of human life. He could not, therefore, have wished that patriotism should be a godless antagonism to it. But rather his plan was for the evangelism of polities. Cæsar's rights and God's requirements both gain practical purpose and emphasis by such an interchange of ideas. Cæsar's tribute would be lacking without the fulfillment of God's claims, and God's designs can never be carried out by a neglect of social and civic duties. The safety of government, then, lies in the complete text: "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

## LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 25

### WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

GOLDEN TEXT: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."—Gal. 5. 25.

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A GOLDEN TEXT for study and application, clearly interpreting the theme and the lesson's heart, throwing life into every part, correcting wrongs and invigorating the right. A plain assumption and consistent requirement.

"If" often expresses doubt; here it binds, meaning "since." No uncertainty exists as to "In whom we live, and move, and have our being." All doubt is in whether we "walk in the Spirit." "Spirit," here, is the Holy Spirit. To "live in the Spirit" is living on friendly terms, in fellowship harmonious, with the Holy Spirit; thus only can we be Christians.

To "walk in the Spirit" is much the same. In Christian life walking is living. To "live in the Spirit" is the Christian's way of walking, advancing in grace and godly service. We "walk by faith" as we "live by faith." We "walk in the light" by being "the light of the world."

"Enoch walked with God" as an agreeable companion, in abiding, growing fellowship. He proceeded along life's journey in delightful, trustful, obedient, reverent company with Jehovah. He lived in the spirit of perpetual holy living and most blessed partnership with his Maker. He thought God's thoughts, and acted godly; for which he was translated to "be forever with the Lord," "for God took him," "that he should not see death"; "for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." Enoch illuminates this

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text. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit" as Enoch did.

We, like the Galatians, reputed as "born of God," baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, members of the divine family, called Christians, are under most urgent obligations to earnest, self-sacrificing, devout living; as Paul says, "Let us walk in the Spirit," since we live in the care and favor of the Holy Spirit.

This Golden Text thus concisely and fully interprets the theme of the lesson—temperance; for temperance is rightness of life, in feeling, thought, speech, action: right attitude in right ways, right position toward wrong; right use of right things, no use of wrong things; having application broad as life, and special itemization in this Scripture lesson.

The dreadfully evil results of intoxicants have made temperance seem chiefly applicable to total abstinence from the drink evil. Paul corrects this view. There are other sins equally defiling, as certain of retribution, and working as strongly and surely toward eternal ruin as the rum curse.

Drunkenness deserves no quarter, and should be relentlessly pursued, overwhelmingly exterminated, and totally obliterated; as much for the honor and reward of abstainers as for the salvation of inebriates. The modern clamor of rum's friends for "personal liberty" is the old-time satanic yell and confession of guilt, expecting defeat, heard in the demoniac church-goer's squall at Capernaum, and the howl of the roving raving maniac of Gadara. Fair-minded men, rightly trained, never utter the cry. Every sane person, open to gospel convictions, at once sees and owns that "No man liveth nor dieth unto himself." Each of us is a purchase of infinite price, and under unbreakable bonds to submissive, obedient reflection of the life and character of the Holy One whose blood bought us.

The inebriate is under the tyrannous, crushing heels of inhuman foes, never to be tolerated by men of con-

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science, intelligence, and anything like humanitarian spirit. We are most emphatically our "brother's keeper," defender, avenger, when he is enslaved by ruinous foes. "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee?" is raving insanity, abandoned madness. The wrong of rum has been oft reported in heaven, and God has come down to see about it; and the wrath, ruin, and burial of Sodom await the evil. No neighbor lover, no fellow-man brother, no honest son of God, no spirit kinsman to Christ can rest while this war is on, nor until victory wins which will dig the grave and cover the curse with a zealous ignominy so deep as to defy all the resurreptive powers of Satan and his allies.

Our Lord offers a gratuitous guaranteed specific for the drink evil. It is a matter of enough right people rightly requesting; making "the voice of the populace the voice of Omnipotence." Successful asking depends on the Spirit, a rare art we temperance workers need for ease, speed, harmony, and abiding results.

Let us not, however, make the hypocrite's mistake who sees motes, magnifies his brother's sins, and is blind to his own beam sins. The divine law does not grade sins into less and worse. Any sin is exceedingly sinful. So-called least sins carry the guilt of all. Openly, universally denounced sins are doing less harm to-day than ignored, excused, covered, pet sins, "which doth so easily beset." Paul here tries to set us right.

Verse 15 begins the task of the text and lesson by an attack upon disagreeable church people, a full broadside bombardment of the church at its most apparently vulnerable exposure; a Gatling-gun pulpit shot into the face of wrangling pew-holders, matching our Lord's testimony that friendliness proves discipleship, by showing that discord is satanic. Backbiting, tongue-lashing, quarrelsomeness of all kinds—ninemold in this lesson—is intemperance of the most virulent, incurable, destructive type, begotten of ill-will, born of hate—"he that hateth is a murderer"; fed on envy, malice,

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strife, wrath, revenge; and trained by jealousy, hypocrisy, and madness. Of all things bad nothing is more repulsive and harder to forgive than the disposition in church members described here: "If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." A vision of fangs and claws; carnivorous brutes fighting and eating each other; shaming the Galatian church into a mob of raving maniacs; and grieving us that those ancient wranglers begot progeny —they should have died heirless! It is thoroughly known that "if ye bite and devour one another" you are as certainly on the bottomless pit track as is the habitual drunkard.

The worst feature of rumism is its inherent, pestiferous, uncontrollable meanness. It might die of its own filthiness but for its native, prolific, ugly selfishness. A peaceable sot, however, and his bland promoter are less intolerable than quarrelsome sanctimoniousness. By intemperate speech total abstainers may become guilty as Judas, criminal as Haman. It cannot be shown that he who ought never to have been born even knew intoxicant tastes. His intemperance was probably imperiousness, like Jezebel, Athaliah. The most offensive person may simply be hateful, intemperate in spirit. "Speaking evil one of another," "taking up a reproach against a neighbor," "bearing false witness," will most effectually bar any person from friendliness with God. The backbiter's and slanderer's prayers mock God. You cannot "walk in the Spirit" except by being "gentle unto all." The scriptural great man is "he who ruleth his own spirit." "Thy gentleness hath made me great," is the witness, confession of Israel's warrior-poet, poet-king. Submissive silence is far better than strife in overcoming evil—as testify many homes. Wrongdoers have within enthroned the most self-destructive force, for "evil shall slay the wicked." Therefore "Fret not thyself because of evildoers"; rather, kindly work out the gospel rules, "If thine

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enemy hunger, feed him," "Recompense to no man evil for evil, or railing for railing," "Condemn not," but pray for foes and leave them with Him who says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay." Christ was greatest and most victorious through submissive silence and open forgiveness. To have kinship with him you need to master this fine art, "Overcome evil with good." You are only at liberty to love, forgive, bless, pray for, and do good to foes.

The Holy Spirit planned this temperance lesson so that the teacher might not fail through example to so impress the scholars that sourness and irritability will be pinched budding, and the children set free to "live and walk in the Spirit."

Verse 16 states the worth of the text as a panacea for all forms of intemperance, and the secret of holy living: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." You need not "let sin reign in your mortal body," nor "obey it in the lust thereof." Absolute victory over every heart foe is here assured to every responsive possessor of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 17 says righteousness is the Holy Spirit's contest. He has undertaken our liberation, elevation, salvation, perfection, and heavenly enthronement. Without him we are helpless. With him we conquer every foe. Though he leads to conflict, as "Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness," he will manage the conflict, grant victory to the tempted through "the sword of the Spirit," and ministering angels will comfort. "Sin shall not have dominion, for ye are under grace"—"if so be that the Spirit dwell in you"—and grace is omnipotent. "By grace are ye saved," "grace shall be sufficient for you." Grace is here Christ's Spirit, for "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," are we claimed, cleansed, used, crowned; in whom we live and walk, doing the things he would.

Verse 18 declares the Spirit greater than law.

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Though "the law is perfect, converting the soul," it may be misunderstood and breed pharisaical persecution; while the Spirit is wisdom, life, peaceable power, holiness, God.

Verses 19, 20 give Paul's analysis of intemperance, under seventeen heads—four more than our Lord names in Mark 7. 21, 22, and nine more than in Rev. 21. 8. How astonishingly humiliating, that human hearts can breed so much corruption—thirty forms of deadly heart pollution! Paul calls his list "works of the flesh." Our Lord characterizes his list as heart defilements. The Revelator terms his list exclusion sins. You are at liberty to confess which is yours, and very fortunate if you have but one; for left to yourself with one, you are hopeless. Paul and the Revelator see the victims as incurables. Christ alone offers hope. Mary Magdalene had seven, Gadara's demoniac had all. Christ cured each. He, the only remedy, merits timely taking. His grace cleanses. His power heals. His word quells storms, restores life, perfects health, and enables believers to "walk in the Spirit," saying, "For me to live is Christ."

Verses 22, 23 outline the best, easiest, quickest way into sober, holy living; the "highway" through due surrender to Christ and entrance upon his service as producer of Spirit fruit. No law of habit or heredity can defeat you here. You thus become "dead to sin and alive to God." Passions and flesh perversions surrendered to Christ become "nailed to his cross" in loving devotion to God, disarming inclinations deserving Paul's closing admonition: "Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another." Christ your "all and in all," with "peace that floweth like a river," will cause you to "live and walk in the Spirit" as conqueror, awaiting his approving "Well done," and welcome, "Come, . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

## LESSON FOR OCTOBER 2

### THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

GOLDEN TEXT: "Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."—Luke 12. 40.

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THIS text is to be interpreted in the light of the parable of the ten virgins. Both refer to the second coming of Christ. The text tells in a sentence what the parable discloses in a story. Jesus was the Prince of story-tellers. The parable is so beautiful that it is almost impossible to restate it without marring its beauty. Apparently there was no outward difference between the wise and the foolish virgins; and yet there was so great a disparity that five were admitted to the marriage feast while the others were excluded.

The parable indicates that to be shut out of the marriage feast it is not necessary that people shall be vicious. Nothing is alleged against the moral character of the foolish virgins. The only obstacle to entrance was lack of oil. What this means has often been discussed. Jesus evidently taught that they lacked *spiritual life*. Upon the need of spiritual life the Bible lays great stress. So far as we can see the foolish virgins were externally faultless; but they were without the life of the Spirit. We learn some lessons:

I. The purpose of God is to impart and develop the life of the Spirit. He desires to make Christian men; to unfold the inner spiritual life. Paul declares that God predestinated us "to be conformed to the image of his Son." Christ came both as an example and a Redeemer. "He hath left us an example that we should follow his steps." That is true. He also came to make

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it possible for us to follow him by giving us life and grace and strength.

The great purpose of God is to make Christian men, brave and true and strong. We misconceive his purpose when we dream that God has put us in the world merely to be happy and contented. It is a rough world in which we live. The labor we have to perform is often difficult. The problems we meet, the burdens we bear, are not easy. But we must bear in mind God's purpose. Our world is a good one for God's purpose, which is to make men. The temptations we resist, the obstacles we overcome, the allurements and enticements we put from us, all help to make us strong. When a blacksmith works on a piece of iron he is doing two things: he may be making a horseshoe, but at the same time he is toughening the muscles of his arm.

God has work for us to do—tasks to perform. We seldom get them done to our liking. But we keep working at them, and all the time, if we may so speak, our tasks and the way we meet them are making us. After a while the Bridegroom comes and we are called upon to give our reckoning. Here is a man endeavoring to do his work. His neighbors say he performs his duty well. He meets his temptations and fights his battles. But he does not accomplish what he desires. He is often downcast because he does his work so poorly and falls so far below his ideals. While he does not finish his work, *he* is made complete by his work. That is what God is trying to do in every life, and what he would do if we would only let him have his way with us.

The old story goes that in New England a visitor was driven among the rocky hills. He saw how rough the fields and hills were and how unproductive the soil appeared, and turning to the driver he inquired, "What do you raise here?" The stage driver replied laconically, "Men." No soil can produce a more valuable harvest. The world's need to-day, as always, is the

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"band of men whose hearts God had touched"; men who in reverent humility and penitence have bowed before Him whose hands were pierced for sin.

II. What we are is revealed by the coming of the Son of man. The bridegroom's coming revealed what the virgins were. A great preacher has said, "Character is revealed by crisis." Up to the time the cry went forth, "Behold the bridegroom cometh," there seemed to be no distinction between the virgins. As soon as the crisis came the foolish virgins realized their lack of oil. It was a matter of preparation. One of the laws running through life is that emergency reveals our real selves.

Two men are called to perform new work. One of them fails and proves by his failure that he is unprepared. The other does not seem more fully equipped but proves equal to the task. There had been preparation of mind and heart and will; and when the hour struck he was ready.

Nations call for men in crises, and often a period of sifting is necessary before the right men are found. In our civil war the South, for a time, had decided advantage because it first found the equipped and prepared man. The South found Lee earlier than the North discovered Grant. Several were tried and proved unequal to the task before the great man who was ready came forth. The greatest men in history have not always been the bold, dashing men who have won notable victories at the beginning of their careers. They have sometimes been the patient, persevering men who have striven, though beaten to-day, to be better fitted for to-morrow's struggle. A defeat led them to more thorough preparation for the next battle. William the Silent and Washington were not undefeated men; but the nations to which they belonged knew they were the kind of men who would "stretch every nerve" to be ready for the next conflict.

As in the battles of the flesh, so in those of the spirit.

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We are sometimes surprised at those who go down in defeat. This is because we see outward appearances only. If heart and brain were laid bare; if we could see the thoughts and purposes of their hearts, we should not be surprised. We are shocked some day to hear of a supposedly good man who has gone wrong. By tampering with evil he has undermined character, and when the crisis came he fell, and great was his fall. Judas loved money long before he betrayed Jesus. It was the opportunity that made the wicked barter possible. Peter had ever been impulsive, but, one day, taken off his guard, he denied Jesus. He could not have denied his Lord a year later, for he was a different man. The emergency reveals us, it does not make us. "Be ye therefore ready: for the Son of man cometh in an hour when ye think not."

III. Lost opportunities do not return. "The door was shut." They cried, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but he answered, "I know you not." It was too late.

The lesson here is one oft mentioned, but it is so manifestly one of the truths Jesus meant to teach, and we so universally fail at this point, that we dare not overlook it.

How often we sigh to recall the golden opportunity! If the foolish virgins had brought oil in their vessels with their lamps, how different everything would have been! We stand looking back over the years, and say if we could only go back and resist the temptation to which we yielded; or if we could help to lift the burden that has crushed a friend whom we might have helped! A mother says, as the evil of her son's life appalls her, "If I had only striven to bring the truth of God into the lad's life!" The sting of memory! What would Paul not have given to go back to assist Stephen, instead of consenting to his being stoned and holding the garments of those who killed him! If they realized the import of it, how sad must have been the disciples, that night in Gethsemane, when Jesus came to them

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and said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." He was virtually saying, "It is too late now. I needed sympathy and fellowship, nay, I yearned for them, and these you might have given, but now it is too late. The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

The sad years all too often rise before us and say it is too late—too late to do what we might have done, or to be what we might have been. "Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now."

IV. This is all so individual, so personal. "Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." The wise virgins did not give of their oil. They could not give it away, nor did they have any to spare. There are some things so much a part of ourselves that we cannot bestow them on others. That is true of spiritual life. If one has money or property he may give it to another; but one cannot give his honesty or purity to another. Religion is personal; Christianity is individual.

So much is said in our age about the social side of the gospel that we need to reëmphasize the individual element of it. Christianity has its social side, and it is an exceedingly important one. Jesus came to make homes sweeter and communities and states better. Jesus came to bring his truth home to the hearts of all men, and hence make the world different. Jesus taught truth that had its application to rulers and magistrates and statesmen. Apply this truth and all men will profit. All men are brethren; the whole world for Christ: these are noble ideals. It has been said that Jesus came not to pick out of the rigging of the sinking ship a sailor here and there who is in danger of perishing; rather he came to save the ship with all on board. But while dwelling on that side of the gospel we must not overlook or undervalue the individual. Jesus thought much of single individuals.

Julia Ward Howe once wrote to an eminent senator of the United States in behalf of a man who was suffering great injustice. He replied, "I am so much taken

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up with plans for the benefit of the race that I have no time for individuals." She pasted this in her album with the comment, "When last heard from our Master had not reached this altitude."

Jesus values the individual. He calls Peter and John and Paul. He saves Augustine and John Newton. He takes a sinner and makes him a saint. The great achievement of Jesus is that while his gospel works as a leaven in society he makes the individual sinner a saint.

The second personal pronoun has a big place in Christianity. *Thou* and *ye* are frequently emphasized. Jesus said, "*Thou* shalt love the Lord *thy* God with all *thy* heart, mind, soul, and strength; and *thou* shalt love *thy* neighbor as *thyself*." That is very searching. No one can escape it. No man can repudiate the claim Christ here makes upon his love and devotion. If you stand some day on an eminence and look out over the valley, the grass all seems to run together in one plot. As the sun shines upon it every single blade is separated from every other blade. God looks upon us as a race and thinks of our relationship to our fellow men; but he also separates every man from every other and makes his demand upon every individual. No man can escape him. Nothing could be more personal, more individual. Everyone must develop his own spiritual life. "Oil" cannot be given by one to another. We can give prayer, love, sympathy, but some things are too personal to give away. This gives vital meaning to the words of Jesus, "Be ye therefore ready also: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." A great man once prayed, "Lord Jesus, come when, where, and as thou wilt, only let me be ready." This is a good prayer for us all.

## LESSON FOR OCTOBER 9

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### THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

GOLDEN TEXT: "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—Matt. 25. 21.

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DEAN STANLEY calls this parable of the talents one of the most important in the Bible, and anyone who was as familiar as he was with Westminster Abbey, where are monuments to England's most illustrious dead, to statesmen and soldiers, poets and preachers, explorers and reformers, to Wilberforce and Livingstone, the Wesleys and Sir John Franklin, Gladstone and the Earl of Shaftesbury, the inscriptions upon which laud their high sense of responsibility, their fidelity, and their worthy achievements, could not well otherwise regard the parable, the natural teaching of which is that life is a trust, that we are accountable for the right use of our divine gifts (talents), and that there will come a time when upon every man's work there will be put a judicial estimate. This Golden Text is an epitome of the parable. Responsibility, a time of reckoning, judgment, these are all here.

1. God's confidence in us makes life a trust which must be administered with fidelity, and which may not be betrayed without penalty. "The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." Something has been committed to our keeping; it is not ours, it belongs to another, and is to be used only in his service. God's confidence in us is astonishing. It is not surprising that we should have confidence in

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him. There is everything to inspire it. "The heavens declare his glory." He is "the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea: which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power." His promises are sure. We believe that he hears and answers our prayers. As John says: "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5. 14, 15). It is not strange that we should have confidence in God, but it is extraordinary that he should have such confidence in us. This story of the Master who goes away and leaves us to do his work in the world shows how complete his confidence in us is. It is touching because it is so personal. Somehow Christ seems to have felt that he could be sure of us, that the work was safe in our hands. Who has not sometimes wondered that the Lord did not lay this responsibility upon angels or archangels rather than upon us? But from choice "he called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods," having absolute confidence in us, for whatever there is in the term "goods," he intrusts it all without fear. Nothing is withheld. And then he goes "into a far country." There is no one who inspects our work; there are no paid overseers standing by us to see that we do our duty; there is no time clock to record the hours of our service. We are left entirely to ourselves.

What is expected of us, anyone may read. There may be difficulties in the Bible, some things hard to understand, but this is not one of them. The parable of the talents is no riddle. No one can excuse himself at the last with the plea, "I could not understand." There is no enigma here. Why, the man who hid his talent, who shirked his responsibility, who wasted his opportunity did not even try to cover his failure and

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shame with any such excuse. He knew well enough what he ought to have done, but he was "wicked and slothful"; not ignorant, but lazy and bad. He knew perfectly what was expected of him by the master, but was disloyal and faithless to the trust committed to him. And we likewise know what is expected of us: we are to traffic in the gifts which have been bestowed upon us, and we are to transact all this business for God. The coming of the kingdom of God in the earth must be by and through our fidelity and zeal.

This parable of the talents stands midway in the chapter between the parable of the ten virgins and Christ's dramatic description of the final judgment. The two parables, both addressed to Christ's intimate followers and friends, touch, as Trench long ago pointed out, two essentially different aspects of the Christian life. In the one people are represented as *waiting* for their Lord; and in the other as *working* for him. The parable of the virgins puts emphasis upon the inner spiritual life, the parable of the talents upon external activity, Christian service, as it is now termed. "Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more." He had been at work. The report which he gave indicated that. And it was this rather than the result of this labor which won his master's hearty approval, for the two-talent man, the "average man," as Peabody styles him, the man with ordinary gifts and ordinary returns from them, who showed by his report like fidelity of toil, if not as large returns, received the same generous commendation. The glory of life is service, and the judgment of our lives will be upon the basis indicated by Jesus in the latter part of this chapter: "I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was sick, and ye visited me; come!" or, "I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was naked, and ye clothed me not; depart!" It is evident that our service must be the right kind of service. In 1695,

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in Montreal, Jeanne Le Ber, the beautiful daughter of a rich merchant of that city, entered the convent of Notre Dame. For nineteen years she lived a life of voluntary self-immolation. Alone in solitary confinement she lived, fasted, and prayed. In her spare moments, when she was not meditating or praying, she embroidered beautiful robes for the priests, which may be seen now in the cathedral in Montreal, and you are told with pious unction that six generations of priests have performed the sacrifice of the mass, robed in these marvelously beautiful vestments, and that the incense from the swinging censers of two hundred years has floated around them in clouds of glory. But there is another and better way of living than that: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." Love is inclusive, rather than exclusive. It walks abroad in the market place rather than seeks the self-gratification of cloister silences; it searches out the needy, and poor, and helpless, and weak. Love is self-forgetful, for love is of God. And it is love which is the impulse to Christian activity and the dynamic of our zeal, as well as the barometer of our fidelity. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto," and "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto," are portentous sentences. Life *is* a trust. Talents have been given us for use, and that for other than personal use. We are accountable agents, and there is a time of reckoning.

2. That there is to be an accounting makes living serious business. The counsel of Grotius, when a young man came to him for advice, "Be serious," was like an inspired utterance. When it is recalled what Christ said, and the way he lived, how else can living be regarded than momentous? "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"—with what frequency our Lord used this solemn formula! "I must work the works of him that sent me"—it was this that gave the tone to his life. In all his teachings Jesus declares for the sacredness of life. And whatever he touched was

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transformed. At his word from the waterpots at Cana there flowed rarest, richest wine. There is nothing insignificant in life. There are no trifles. Rossini, in speaking of a chorus in G minor, tells that when he was writing it he dipped his pen in a medicine bottle by mistake and a blot resulted, and that when he tried to play the measure this blot took the form of a natural, showing him the effect a change from G minor to G major would make. It was the merest trifle, yet making all the difference between gladness and sorrow. Everything has value when life is regarded as a trust. Nothing is so trivial that it does not hold wondrous possibilities. "The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn" was Emerson's way of expressing this important truth. It was a single word in a sermon to which he was listening that brought about the conversion of Savonarola, the mighty Florentine preacher. A fluttering butterfly determined the career of the artist and naturalist, William Hamilton Gibson. A chance conversation between Hawthorne and Longfellow gave us "Evangeline." It was the suggestion of a passer by that led Milton to write his "Paradise Regained." Every day is fraught with eternal possibilities. You go out in the morning, and suddenly, unexpectedly, the whole course of your life is changed. There is the flaming of a star and you follow it to the Bethlehem manger; there is a smile from a friend and life becomes a new and beautiful song; a bush by the roadside glows with some supernal light, and from its shining depths the voice of God is heard, and the world for you becomes a new world. Moreover, every day is freighted with opportunities to influence others for good. Christ no longer walks among men as he walked by Galilee; no more is his voice heard in the house of Levi or Lazarus; no more can sorrow-smitten souls behold his falling tears; he has gone away. Now we are his witnesses. The burden of sympathy is upon us. The evidence of his power to exorcise evil spirits

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must be given by us. The Light of the World is gone into the heavens, and the dark places of the earth must be lighted through our shining. It follows, therefore, inasmuch as there has been laid upon us the solemn responsibility of representing Jesus Christ to men, and as it is ordained that we must give account of our stewardship, that living *is* serious business.

3. There is a day of review and award. Dr. John Watson has a sermon entitled "Divine Service a Speculation," on the text, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa. 126. 6). But if ever there was a certainty it is here. There is nothing in the way of a "chance" in the service of Christ or in the service of Satan. The outcome is neither problematical nor fortuitous. "Whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," are divine words: "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" was Paul's confident expectation. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised": so James believed, and with reason. God's workmen are assured of their wages. They receive them in part now and here. As Lowell wrote:

"Tis not the grapes of Canaan that repay,  
But the high faith that failed not by the way.

And then there is this final adjustment of accounts. "My reward is with me," says Jehovah, "to give every man according as his work shall be." This certainty is so absolute that the beatitude follows as a matter of course: "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22. 14). "God may not pay at the end of every week, my lord," said Anne of Brittany to Cardinal Richelieu, "but he pays at the last." And he does.

## LESSON FOR OCTOBER 16

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### THE LAST JUDGMENT

GOLDEN TEXT: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."—Matt. 25. 40.

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WHEN Daniel Webster was once asked what was the greatest thought that had ever occupied his mind, he answered, "The fact of my personal accountability to God." This lesson has to do with this great fact. We cannot escape our moral responsibility to God and man. We live in a moral universe, presided over by a personal Father. Every phase of our life witnesses to this fact, and every fact of history authenticates consciousness. Christ teaches that life is more than mere living. Service is more than activity. Men are more than animal organisms. The world is personal. Duty is divine. Service is sacred. Man is eternal.

The claim set forth in this chapter, of Jesus being Judge of all men, is, as Dr. George Jackson states, "The most stupendous assertion that ever fell from human lips. A young Jewish Carpenter, whose brief career, as he himself well knew, was just about to end in a violent and shameful death, tells the little fearful band which still clung to him that a day is coming when before *him* all nations shall be separated as a shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats."

1. *The Fact of Judgment* is affirmed by the Old and New Testaments. In fact, the belief is found in the creeds of all religions and taught by all philosophers. Revelation asserts it, and reason demands it as an essential element of divine justice. The race will never be able wholly to destroy the consciousness that "every

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one *must* give an account of himself before God.” The wisdom of Solomon says that “though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished.” Majorities cannot alter divine justice. There can be no cheating of infinite justice, however much there may be among men. Divine justice, as well as love, is supported by Omnipotence. There is no chance for failure with the absolute. The law of sin is death. Sin can neither be excused nor covered up.

Foul deeds will rise,  
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

We must hold firmly to human freedom, individual responsibility, and divine judgment. This needs no logical proof, since every man carries within his own breast a sort of “automatic judgment seat.”

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,  
And every tongue brings in a severall tale,  
And every tale condemns me for a villain.

The unpardoned past cannot be silenced by the superficial sentiment that would deny the necessity of any final judgment.

2. *The Reasonableness of a Judgment.* Mankind in general entertains a very cheap notion of divine judgment. They forget that God’s judgments are not as man’s, and that government must be protected and law upheld. The average individual seems to believe in the creed of the anarchist, when dealing with the moral government of the universe. “Fatherhood,” says Principal Fairbairn, “is not infinite good nature, oblivious of faults, indulgent to the wrongdoer, and tolerant of wrong. There is something more terrible in the attitude of the father to sin than of the judge to crime, for the judge sees in the crime only an offense against law, but the father feels in sin the ruin of his son.” There must be a justice in love, if it be true love, and love can never alter truth.

There is an eternal difference between right and wrong, and herein we have the basis of responsibility

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and judgment. "We have," as one authority says, "a robust common sense of morality which refuses to believe that it does not matter whether a man has lived like the apostle Paul or the emperor Nero. We can never crush out the conviction that there must be one place for Saint John, who was Jesus's friend, and another for Judas Iscariot, who was his betrayer." There must be,

Else earth is darkness at the core,  
And dust and ashes all that is.

3. *The High Character of True Service.* The high value placed upon all true service is one of the chief characteristics of the Christian system. The lowly deed is lifted out of the commonplace and invested with a divine meaning. The loathsome beggar of the street is no longer an object of scorn, but a marred temple of divinity. The leper hospital is transformed into a palace royal, where ministering missionaries care for the children of the King. Earth and heaven meet in the ministry of every true disciple. There is danger that some may come to think, after a superficial study of this lesson, that Christianity is only an exalted form of philanthropy. While it is true that Jesus glorifies service when done with a pure motive, it is nevertheless profoundly true that by mere works no person is justified. We must place alongside the Master's emphasis here that other passage, which reads, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Philanthropy is apt to idolize service, while Christianity makes service the visible expression of a life sustained and inspired by faith and hid with Christ.

This text must have been the inspiration of Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal," since it presents the same ideal of Christian service as taught by the Master himself. The common man sees only the cowering leper

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"in the desolate horror of his disease." The Christian looks to the soul of the leper, and beholds the "image of Him who died on the tree."

4. *Service and Judgment.* The basis of the separation, says Dr. Gibson, is found in the answer to two questions: How have you treated Christ? and, How have you treated Christ's poor? "For inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me."

The unseen Christ is present as we minister to every needy brother. Our neighbor is more than a man fallen among thieves. He is to us what the incarnate Jesus was to Mary with her alabaster box of precious ointment. We can all practice the presence of the omnipresent Christ in our going about doing good. Service is a form of the sacrament, since

The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
In whatso we share with another's need.

The apostle Paul had learned the secret of service when, even in persecution and imprisonment, he rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer for Christ. They only are true kings and queens who can say with him, "For me to live is Christ."

5. *The Separation Eternal.* The rewards and punishments of the judgment are both eternal. In a volume entitled "The Last Things" the author, Dr. Beet, states that the Pauline epistles present the notion of punishment being eternal and the ruin final and that there is no intimation of any future probation. In John's Gospel he discovers nothing additional that can change the Pauline teaching, aside from some passages which may be interpreted as metaphors. The Synoptics give punishment a more conspicuous place than the preceding. Christ opens the door of the so-called eternal prison, and we hear the wailing of the lost. "Absolute endlessness of punishment" is very strongly emphasized.

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One class of the textual critics would have us translate the word *aiώνιος* as meaning "age-lasting" instead of "eternal." This going back four or five centuries for the meaning of a word which had a distinct current meaning is a violation of the laws that govern the development of language and would destroy the true interpretation of all New Testament teaching. We cannot believe that when the inspired writers used the word "eternal" with its current meaning, they intended to mean less than they said. It would be very presumptuous for us to take the forty passages in which Christ and the apostles refer to the "eternal," "everlasting," and "unending" life as the future rewards of the righteous and limit them to suit the superficial theories of those who prefer not to believe in the eternal punishment of the wicked. We are not seeking to dogmatize as to the *character* of future punishment—since much of the teaching is figurative and admits of varied interpretations—but as to its *duration* we maintain that its endlessness is unmistakably taught throughout the New Testament. If "eternal" is to become "age-lasting," then God must arbitrarily make the change, and such an act would destroy the attributes of Divinity and annul the very essence of sin.

6. *The Surprises of the Judgment.* Dr. Watkinson has spoken interestingly of the teaching of this chapter under the heading, "The Surprises of the Judgment." He states that "the righteous feel that some mistake has been made; they recall no such distinguished opportunities, they are sure they never rendered any such splendid service, and they feel altogether unworthy of such eulogy and reward." The mistake was, however, in their failure to appreciate the divinity of man in relation to the Master. They were separating Christ from humanity, of which he is an incarnate part. The royal commission to love and serve had not yet reached them in its entirety. They were still drawing ■ fatal

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line between service to Christ direct and ministry to men.

The unrighteous share in the surprise. They cannot recall when they saw "Jesus hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison," and did not minister unto him. They lacked vision, and the Master knew their inner life. If they had been waiting for Jesus to appear, it was certain they had not been acting the part of the good Samaritan to the unserved multitude of his poor. These words are a prophecy of the surprises that are in store for the modern priests and Levites who selfishly pass by Christ's daily calls to service.

The great service is always done with but partial realization of its real character and importance. Columbus died without knowing that he had discovered the great continent of America. Wesley was carried to his tomb by six poor men, knowing not that Methodism would circle the globe and that a century after his day it would have become the largest Protestant body of believers in the world. The Sunday school teacher who led young Moody to Christ knew not the value of those hours. The church society that won McKinley for the Christian life waited a generation to gain an adequate appreciation of the service that had been rendered the Church universal and the nation.

We ask, "Why is such service so valuable?" and the answer comes, "Ye did it unto me." The Sunday school teacher occupies a position of power and influence that is excelled only by the child's first and greatest teacher, a Christian mother. If our work is done faithfully, eternity will have many glad surprises in store for us. Our chief call is to serve those placed within our care, remembering that he who lives each day in accord with Christ's command is best prepared for that eternal day when the Master shall say to them on his right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

## LESSON FOR OCTOBER 23

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### CHRIST'S LATER MINISTRY AND TEACHING

GOLDEN TEXT: "And it came to pass, when the days were well-nigh come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face."—Luke 9. 51 (R. V.).

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THIS is a revelation of courage—a courage so lofty and sure that at first it seems too great for human powers. We are to be followers of Jesus, we confess, but how shall we follow him here? Is not this one of the marks divine in which we may glory but which we may not emulate? The question is well worth working out.

If the life of Jesus was no more than a mere moving picture of predetermined and unchangeable experiences, there is small meaning in this incident. But if the life of Jesus, being a truly human life, was lived under truly human conditions, if it was a progressive, developing life, this setting of his face to Jerusalem is fairly alight with vivid meaning.

For Jesus had seen Calvary! Southward from simple, eager Galilee, across the now inhospitable country of Samaria, was the city. Thither he must go, to do the best work, to give the best message, to put all the significance of his incarnation into one supreme expression of God's love and God's holiness. There—he could see this now without need of any omniscient vision—there, where he would do his best, sin would do its worst. He might linger in Galilee indefinitely, healing, comforting, busy with a gracious and usually accepted ministry. But that would be to move in a circle. In Galilee he could utter no final challenge. In Galilee he could find no kingdom. The world

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he must conquer, or fail utterly in his mission, was the world which looked to Mount Zion. Its conquest would be by death, but there only could his work come to final testing and final triumph.

So his face was set steadfastly toward Jerusalem. The thing was not easy, even to him who sought no easy task, for Jesus was taking to Jerusalem a message Jerusalem would not hear. To Galilee the miracle was all, the message almost nothing. To Jerusalem the words he spoke were vital, the meaning of his personality was the supreme issue. Miracle could not help—when he raised the very dead at Bethany his deed inspired in his foes yet stronger purpose to destroy him.

The journey to Jerusalem was like no other journey of Jesus. Its every incident marks it as different. The others were tours, with little urgency of haste and no outstanding destination. This was a forced march. No tarrying by the way; no gracious ministration; no gathering of the villagers for teaching; but straight on to Jerusalem! The very aspect of the Master was changed, so that his disciples were afraid when they saw his set, determined face. Hitherto they had journeyed as other travelers journey, but now their going forth is as soldiers, in haste to reach the battlefield, their Captain going grimly before.

For this going was to death! Jesus knew that. His disciples could not see it, but to him it was plain. Jerusalem already burned to kill him; he would do nothing, could do nothing, to allay that wicked ardor; it would grow intenser with every moment of his presence in the city.

Jesus shrank from death. So have other men who yet have died full bravely, suffering greater bodily pain than even the cross was to bring. Was his hesitation like to theirs? Not if he was indeed the Christ. The effect of physical pain he had already discounted; he was prepared for that. But at Jerusalem the sin

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of the world, which he had come to take away, would rise to its highest height of guiltiness. The cross would mean Christ's supreme glory, but it would also mean man's supreme shame. The sinless One shrank from the necessity of facing sin's most dreadful revelation, wrought out upon himself, the revealer of the compassionate God! For how could God remain compassionate in the face of that crowning affront to his heart of love? Would not the death of the Man Christ Jesus—wondrous proof of divine love though it would be—make man a sinner beyond all hope and grace? Could there be any unpardonable sin unless it were this sin? What devil's ingenuity could devise a blacker malignity, a deadlier thrust at God?

This mystery of iniquity weighed on the soul of Jesus. It was never absent from his thought as the company made steadily southward. It colored all his words and all his deeds on this strangest of all his journeys.

Why, then, did he set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem? Because he could see beyond the mystery. There would be struggle, bitter and sore, before he could take the cup and drink it; Gethsemane was not yet. But if he could not now see into the Gethsemane storm, he could nevertheless see its farther side. He was to be "received up" after he had entered into the depths.

The storm was not to be irresistible; sin was not to be invincible; death was not to destroy but to perfect his work. When the worst that sin could do was done, it would be less potent than God's best. Now he was Jesus of Nazareth, the prophet of Galilee; then he would be the world's Christ, conqueror for all men and for all time of death and sin, to every heart's need the power of God, the wisdom of God, and the love of God.

So he set his face to go up to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face, that his coming should not

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be by stealth, but boldly, as befitted the King coming to the King's city.

Can we look at this episode in the life of Jesus from the point of view of to-day's disciple? He has given us an example, that we should follow in his steps. That he has done so much and we can do so little does not release us from that obligation. But his obligation does more than put obligation on us; it puts inspiration in us. And this is the word of our King, speaking in this steadfast setting of his face toward the cross: *Go up to your Jerusalem!*

That is the test. There is a lightsome, care-free side to our Christian life. It is an emancipated life; guilt and fear have gone, and we share the joy which the Jesus-circle knew in the days of the Galilean ministry. But there is another side. If we are to follow Jesus we must follow all the way. Jerusalem ever waits to test the power we have gained in Galilee. And because in us as in our Lord God's grace always means conflict with man's sin, we cannot escape Jerusalem.

Go up to your Jerusalem! For that you also are come to your hour of opportunity. The gospel has traveled far and long before it has come to you. Centuries of agony and blood and obedience have been spent for your conversion. A thousand servants of Christ have followed him to the end of hard journeys that you might hear his gracious invitation. Is it thinkable that all that process is to stop with you, as though you were earth's last inhabitant? Rather, is not your willingness to confess him in the place of danger the chiefest proof you can give that you really have found Christ?

Go up to your Jerusalem! In other words, finish your task. So long as any remnant of sacrifice is unyielded, so long as any recognized duty is refused, so long as any purpose of high service is not set at work, so long your life will be an unfinished thing and so a useless thing.

## CHRIST'S LATER MINISTRY AND TEACHING

Anybody can start at any task. Beginners are as numerous as folks. And anybody can quit! The easiest word that can fall from human lips in time of stress is, "O, what's the use?" Lord Randolph Churchill once said, "I'm going to stop trying to serve the public. People are ungrateful. My motives are questioned, my conduct denounced, my ideas ridiculed, my sanity doubted. I've had enough, and I'm going to give it up." How human—and how futile! The only thing the quitter has made certain is the loss of all he has done to date. An engine nine tenths finished is no engine. No wise mariner turns back the day before he is due to sight the land of his desire. A homestead abandoned after four years is as surely lost to the settler as if he had never lived on it. A Christian can afford to die, for then he is safe, beyond reach of any foe; he cannot afford to quit, for then he is lost, beyond reach of any friend.

Go up to your Jerusalem! You do not need to know what awaits you, but you need to go! There are failures a-plenty in life, and some of them are of more value than many successes, but the greatest, completest of all failures is to see the Jerusalem duty and stay in Galilee's secure tranquillity. And it is not even secure. No man is safe who has chosen the easy road for the sake of its ease. John Bunyan going to preach at the little village of Samsell knew a warrant was issued for his apprehension, and that his arrest would lead to imprisonment—maybe to exile or death. He had just married a second time; one of his children was blind—all were dependent on him; but he went to the chapel, was arrested and adjudged to the imprisonment which made him great. The world would have been poorer forever if Bunyan had turned aside from his Jerusalem. But he steadfastly set his face to go, and "lighted upon a place where was a Den," in which through twelve long years he dreamed his undying allegory.

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Go up to your Jerusalem! The journey is not made in a day, but it can be made sure in a moment. Cæsar won Rome at the Rubicon, though it took long, hard fighting to make his conquest plain to the world. Luther was greater than his foes at Worms because he had set his face steadfastly to go thither. Set out; that is more than half the fight.

Go up to your Jerusalem! There your last and greatest work awaits you. George Waring found it so when he went to Cuba—he freed Cuba from the grip of the pestilence, though that pestilence laid him low. Lincoln found it so when he promised to God and to humanity the proclamation of emancipation. It was the crowning courage of his life, though it brought him nearer to his martyrdom.

What is your Jerusalem? Who can say, save you—and God? Go aside from the world for a while and confront your own life. Is there any corner of it withheld from the use and authority of Jesus Christ? Do you know more of his will than you are ready to do? Is there some service you will not give, some task you will not attempt, some sacrifice you will not make, because you know the cost will be heavy? *That* is your Jerusalem. You have seen it, but it has meant a garden of sweat like unto blood, a thorn crown, a cross. There is pain in it, and loneliness, and the death of self. And so you linger in Galilee.

But if you will look again at your Jerusalem you shall see that it is more than all this. For there is an empty tomb outside the city gate, and a hill where He who showed you the way to Jerusalem was received up into glory. Olivet, not Golgotha, is the end of the journey, so far as we may see. And beyond Olivet, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

LESSON FOR OCTOBER 30

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THE ANOINTING OF JESUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "She hath done what she could."—Mark 14. 8.

THE EXTRAVAGANCE OF GRATITUDE

BY FRANK NEFF, B.D.

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IT is marvelous how a vital contact with Jesus brings out the best that is in man. It may be a dormant intellectual power that has never been suspected by even the closest friend, until awakened by the touch of Christ. Again, it may be a genius for organizing and extending the church, or, possibly, some undreamed-of power of love has been roused into intense devotion, whereby no sacrifice or service is counted too great for the sake of Christ. Such an awakening came to Mary. It was called out by what the Master had done for her brother Lazarus, whom she had seen sicken, die, buried, but restored to life. She had already loved the Master, for sitting at his feet she had chosen that good part which was not to be taken away from her.

His power had stirred her life to its very depths. Throughout the time of his active ministry she must have known him, and certainly since his intimate connection with her own family she has watched with growing reverence the wonderful course of his life. The conviction has grown upon her that he is none other than the long-promised Messiah, and her awakening soul quickly yields to his gracious power. Doubtless her heart had been yearning all this time to give to him some adequate expression of her feeling, though, apparently, the opportunity had never yet come. But at last she finds her time. The supper is

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spread, the guests have come, Lazarus, once dead, reclines at the table, and, above all else, Jesus is there. Now what shall she do? Can she express the gratitude that is flowing like a flood through her heart? Can she stand before him, and in beautiful speech express what she feels in her soul? Or can she lay at his feet some earthly gift that would repay him for what he has done? No, she cannot do these things, for it would require the speech of angels, or the wealth of kings. She has neither. But one thing she has, her cruse of precious ointment, possibly one of her dearest possessions, being saved for her own burial. This she brings forth, and, forgetful of all else save her consuming gratitude, anoints his head, his feet, and then wipes his feet with her loosened hair.

This act may well be called "the extravagance of gratitude." That the disciples considered it wastefully extravagant is proven by their criticism of her act, as the prosaic mind has ever considered all great sacrifice. But sincere gratitude is always utterly unreasonable, judging solely from the standpoint of the worldly wise. In fact, even here Judas speaks the words of the wisdom of this world when he condemns her extravagance, but between wisdom and the expression of such gratitude, wasteful though it appear, Jesus unqualifiedly commends the latter.

Such gratitude will go to any length seeking full expression. It never stops to reason concerning the wisdom of sacrifice. The cost of real sacrifice is never, can never, be counted. Its only question here is, "What can I do for Him who has done so much for me?"

So her gratitude found expression in a lavish outpouring that to the disciples seemed wasteful and unavailing; but the Master said, "She hath done what she could—a good work—let her alone," and that wherever the gospel should be preached this story was to be told.

The thoughtless may wonder at this, not being able

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to see the reason for its great importance. But we may find in her grateful act an expression of everything that would bring us into favor with Christ.

We find, first of all, a recognition of his divine mission. Men persistently misunderstood him, though he had tried for the three years of his ministry to make them see that he was, in truth, the Son of God. And while Mary does not use these words, yet there is in her action a tacit confession that he is indeed the One who fulfills all prophecy. There must have been a peculiar satisfaction to Jesus in her sincere acknowledgment of that power which others had been so slow to discern. Some have written of the "loneliness" of Jesus. If he was lonely it was the loneliness of not being understood. Mary seems to have overcome the prevailing density of mind, and in this to have merited highly his approval. What does Christ mean to me? Is he a prophet? a great and good man? the best and most perfect man who ever lived? Yes, all this, but more. He is the divine Son of God, come to earth for the redemption of man, and worthy of the greatest recognition possible for man to pay.

She further showed her gratitude by an open expression of her convictions. Secret discipleship may be possible, but surely it never could satisfy the heart of Jesus. Possibly Mary could have crowned him in her heart, and yet have kept herself in the background. Expediency may have whispered so to her. But what is expediency where such boundless gratitude rules? She had formerly been rebuked for choosing to sit at the Master's feet instead of taking a more obscure but practical part in affairs. But what is rebuke where the heart overflows with love like hers? Propriety may have held her back, for was she not only a woman, and would not any prominence on her part be considered a breach of good manners, and entirely out of place? Perhaps so, but when did propriety ever quench the utterance of such gratitude as moved her?

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Jesus, at least, did not consider her out of place. Rather, he rebukes those who so thought. Her open expression pleased him, for he had emphatically said that whosoever should confess him before men, him would he confess before the Father in heaven. What a mighty power would be added to the forces of righteousness if all men who secretly believe in Christ should make open acknowledgment of him! The strong would be made stronger, the timid brave, the wavering would be established, and multitudes who have given but little thought to Christ would be so impressed that they would seek, find, and serve him. One who is truly grateful, and willing to do what he can for his Saviour, will lose no opportunity to make public confession of his love for Christ.

Again, her gratitude found expression through the channel of a valuable gift. This "cruse of pure nard" was of no small value. It might well have been among the gifts of a king, and coming as it did from one evidently not notably rich there is little wonder that the disciples were filled with amazement at such reckless prodigality. But they, though ignorantly, were reckoning with a fully awakened heart, when world-values are utterly swallowed up in love-values, and cost is scorned, as something entirely unworthy in the presence of a higher power. As William Cutter so beautifully sings,

She loved her Saviour, and to him  
Her costliest present brought;  
To crown his head, or grace his name,  
No gift too rare she thought.

As well speak of the glowing summer sun without warmth as of love without gifts. The ability of the giver may vary—the spirit never. The true measure of a man's soul often may be taken by noting what manner of visible expression he makes of his gratitude. In material things this is a truth commonly observed. Note two brief incidents to make clear this meaning.

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In one case, known to the writer, a sum of money was found. After correspondence the owner was found and the lost purse restored, but the owner, while quickly accepting his money, failed even to repay the postage that the finder had spent in seeking the owner. In a Western city a railway employee found a bag of diamonds. They were restored to their owner, who had gone to her home in the East. In a few days the finder received an unmounted gem, with an inclosure of money sufficient to have it cut and mounted to his own taste, without any expense to himself. The incidents illustrate a common difference in character, one lacking a sense of gratitude, the other showing a marked degree of sensible appreciation. This is true not only in dealing with man: God suffers at the hands of such people, and his kingdom lags, because men who find their all in him fail to express their gratitude by gifts which would mean so much in hastening his day. The world will never be taken for Christ until his followers share with him their wealth; until they pour out their gifts for more churches and missions, built and paid for; until there are more workers in the homeland, in the city, on the frontier, and in all neglected places; until we have better educational equipment, and the advancement of all our connectional interests, and, in particular, until the great fields abroad, teeming white unto the harvest, are manned with skilled workers for the Master, and the ripening grain is gathered into his garner, in a measure commensurate with his grace. May the lavish spirit of Mary be poured out upon our church until multitudes of hearts are opened, as was hers, that a flood of gold be poured out at his feet for the salvation of a world that is lost in sin and will never know the light unless it be brought by those who have themselves felt his gracious power.

But the climax of gratitude comes in her service. Not only does she perform the honorable task of anointing his head—she anoints his feet, and then dries

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them with the hair of her head. Gifts alone cannot pay the debt of gratitude that we owe to God. Gifts may fully express human gratitude, though this is questionable. She poured out her love in lowly service. It was service accompanying the gift. Jesus said to Simon, for the third time, "Simon, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved and said, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus then told him what must be done if he really meant what he said: "Feed my sheep." Here is the real test. Sitting in a cushioned pew, enjoying the service, is not serving God. You may have paid for the pew, or even may have given freely for the advancement of the kingdom, but unless a deeper, more personal sacrifice has been made, the offering is incomplete.

In a college town a missionary collection was being taken. One after another the people were making their offering. A young man, whose heart was deeply stirred, unable to give what he considered adequate, took a card, wrote his own name, and the single word "Myself." He had given more than all the others. His, like Mary's, was an extravagant gratitude. But did any other kind ever merit the approval of the Master?

## LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 6

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### THE LAST SUPPER

GOLDEN TEXT: "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."—Luke 22. 19.

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THIS is the only service established by Christ which we are commanded to observe as a memorial. The Old Testament puts more emphasis on the warning, "lest ye forget," than the New Testament does. But it is well that we observe this sacrament as a memorial, for it represents the very heart of the gospel. The value of it as a memorial will depend on our estimate of the turpitude of sin. If sin is only a disease or a blunder, which deserves pity or at the most contempt, salvation from it will be no more than a convenience, not a great moral necessity, and the memory of it will only be a beautiful sentiment. But if sin is treason in the moral government of God, a violation of God's holy law and love, and a revolt against God himself, something so deep and awful that salvation from it necessitated the death of Christ, then this memorial will be for us a sacrament which will enthrall our love and reverence, and put us on the stretch to live worthy of its lofty spirit. Like the cross, of which it is an expression, it shows God's protest against sin, but his undying love for the sinner. Plato said, "Perhaps God can forgive deliberate sin, but I do not see how. . . . Evil and its due reward are riveted together." The supper shows how God can be just and yet the justifier of all that come to him by Christ. If any are offended at what some people call a "blood theology" or an "ensanguined realism," let them remember that

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our use of the phrase, "the blood of Christ," is by Christ's own authority and example. The phrase is not ours, but his: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. 26. 28, R. V.).

In the supper Christ gave a new and perpetual significance to the Old Testament "blood of the covenant." The text has three important suggestions for us:

I. That Christ is a Saviour from sin. The supper is the symbol of Christ giving up his life for us not only as the highest expression of self-sacrificing love, but in a far deeper sense as the ground upon which our sins can be forgiven and the divine life imparted to the soul. The supper fairly introduces us to the fact of the atonement, but in this brief space and for the purpose of this sermon there is neither time nor need to discuss the many theories of the atonement. We rest content with the fact of it. It is easy to become so shadowy in our theory of the atonement that it will mean little to us and nothing to the world. An over-refinement of taste in the theory often issues in a nebulous theology and a devitalized gospel. There is something deeper in the atonement as a fact than is brought out in any or in all of the theories of it taken together; just as there is a something in experience which eludes analysis and defies expression. Most of the difficulties in the theories of the atonement are settled in the experience of it, and many have been transfigured by its power who had no theory of it whatever.

Christ's suffering for us differs from our suffering for one another by the whole diameter of human experience. No amount or degree of mere human suffering can atone for sin. Christ's suffering was unique in that it was redemptive. Like ours, it was an example, but unlike ours it was a dynamic. Christ did not die for the world to show his love for it in the dramatic and useless way that Portia stabbed herself

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to show her love for Brutus; Christ died to save the world as none other ever did or could. We cannot fathom the depth of the mystery of Christ's death for sin, but this we know, that by it our sins are forgiven and we are brought into oneness with God.

The apostles who stood nearest to Christ, and who best understood his mind, did not attempt to establish his death as an atonement for sin by argument in their early preaching; they proclaim it as a fact. However it may be explained, the fact of experience is that by Christ's death we come into a life union with God. Christ's death, somehow, has a fundamental relation to our salvation, and when all the facts have been considered the evangelical and scriptural view of it, that Christ died for the ungodly and that in his blood we have the remission of sins, is the most satisfactory. We take life as a practical problem and do the best we can with it, however little we may understand its philosophy; so, too, must we do with religion.

The supper not only appeals to our deepest emotions, but it has the profoundest significance for our intellect and will. It shows the turpitude of sin, the value of the soul, the love of God, and the redemptive sacrifice of Christ.

The new covenant in Christ's blood of which the supper is the symbol established a relation of oneness between man and God, and in this the Old Testament and New Testament come together. They focus in Christ's death for the sin of the world by which man is reconciled to God. The necessity to suffer, die, and rise again was taken for granted by Christ himself, and he announced it to his disciples as soon as they were able to hear it. He came to render a service to the world, in the will of God, which involved his death. That death was not an emergency which he consented to meet after he came; the very object of his coming was to give his life a ransom for many. He meant that his disciples should see in the supper his sacrifice for

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the sin of the world, and they came to so understand it; and when they went forth to preach the gospel, Jesus Christ crucified and risen as Redeemer and Saviour was taken for granted. Paul centers his gospel in the power and life of Christ who died for our sins and was raised for our justification. The supper will ever mean that Christ died for us and by that death we have the remission of our sins.

II. The second suggestion of the text is that Christ is the Bread of Life. That is, he not only saves, but he sustains. Christ is our salvation and our sustentation. He gives us comfort in worship, strength in work, patience in suffering, victory in conflict, and triumph in death. He keeps the life he saves. The elements which he distributed at the supper represented the common meal, and they suggest that he is the sustainer of the common life. He has a right to all our life because he sustains it all. The bread that he gives us is not his word nor his bounty, but himself. He is the only founder of religion who gives himself as the life and power of his disciples. Abstract truth is light, but not power. Christ personalizes truth and imparts it to us as a living force. Forever Christ will be the exhaustless source of soul satisfaction. He creates an infinite longing in the soul for himself, and then by his presence satisfies the longing. He tells us that if we eat of the bread that he will give us we shall never hunger, by which he means that there will ever be a keen relish for spiritual bread and always bread enough to satisfy the hunger. The soul will be forever satisfied in him. Just as he distributed the elements of the common meal at the supper, so when he fed the hungry multitude he multiplied the common bread. There is a certain equality of souls before him. In the matter of need there is no mass or class with Christ. Rich and poor, learned and crude, fared alike in that multitude. All were hungry and all were fed. None got less than the common meal and none

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got more. So, as the bread of life, he gives himself to all. To none does he give less than himself and to none more. All souls are in sin without him and are saved with him. He satisfies the longing of the soul, as bread satisfies the hunger of the body.

Religion is not a luxury which we may treat lightly, but a moral necessity without which we perish. Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever." The life that he thus imparts is the abundant life which he came to give to the world. He became the bread of life by dying for sin. We must take and partake of this bread if we are to have the divine life. Just as the body assimilates the bread of the table, so must the soul assimilate the character of Christ by entering into his life and spirit. He is then to us the bread of God that nourished us to life eternal. His shed blood is our redemption, his broken body is our eternal bread. But each one must partake for himself. No one can do it for him. This salvation and sustentation is an individual matter. Christ as the bread of life puts emphasis on the supremacy of the spiritual and rebukes that gross materialism which is content with carnal satisfaction. It is not a meal Christ gives to the world, but himself. "The bread that I shall give him is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "Take, eat; this is my body": thus Christ puts himself at our disposal as the sustentation forever of the life that he redeemed. Christ "satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

III. The third suggestion of the text is that the supper is a memorial. "Do this in remembrance of me." But how are we to keep alive the remembrance of Christ's redeeming and sustaining work? Paul says as oft as we eat the bread and drink the cup of this sacrament we do show forth the death of Christ till he comes again. But how? There is only one way

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that is entirely worthy, and that is to illustrate the noble spirit of the sacrament in loving service. The best way to honor the memory of those we love is to live lives which they would approve. We are to interpret to the world the sacrifice of Christ by giving ourselves for others in some such way as he gave himself for us. We best honor the memory of our dead soldiers by making the noblest use of the heritage which they purchased with their blood. Our praise would be hollow if we were false to our country and made merchandise of liberty and patriotism. We best honor the memory of Christ by exemplifying his spirit in our daily conduct. To celebrate the supper without living his spirit would be a mockery, not a memorial. Paul gives us a life program in Rom. 12. 1, 2. That carries out the idea of the supper as a memorial—our common life surrendered, sanctified, occupied, and transfigured, interpreting to the world the perfect will of God by doing it. Every time we partake of the supper we increase our obligation to live the Christlike life. To take up our cross and daily follow him is our best memorial of him. Participation in his sacrificial service is our royal road to his honor.

We have, then, set forth in the supper (1) Christ as our Salvation, (2) Christ as our Sustentation, and (3) our obligation to perpetuate his memory by continuing his life and method in loving sacrificial service.

**LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 13**

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**WATCH AND PRAY**

**GOLDEN TEXT:** "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."—Matt. 26. 41.

**BY CHARLES RAYMOND ROSS, B.D.**

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"WATCH and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." The lesson of which these words are the Golden Text teaches us that as we do not know the hour when Christ will come we should ever be ready. The coming of Christ to each individual is certain whether it be soon or late, but how difficult it is to deal wisely with the inevitable. The uncertainty of the time has tempted many to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" who hope the Lord will delay until they are prepared. Christ, knowing many fall by this temptation, warns us that the coming of the Son of man shall be like the coming of the flood when men were eating, drinking, and sinning and "knew not until the flood came and took them away." The story of the two servants in this lesson and the parable of the ten virgins illustrate perfectly who are wise and who foolish concerning this coming event. The World's Temperance Lesson has its point in the last four verses of the chapter; the substance of which is that a servant was tempted to become a debauchee, thinking because his lord delayed he would have time to prepare. He became a drunkard, and his lord came at an unexpected moment and condemned him. The first of these four verses tells of the temptation; the second, of the fall; the third, of the surprise; and the last, of punishment. We see, as did Christ, that temptation is the first entrance through which we pass to condemnation. Standing before her glittering gates we must be wary;

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if we pass by we are safe, but if we should enter we run the risk of eternal death. Knowing the danger here, Christ says, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation."

There are two classes which tamper with temptation. The first is represented by the unfaithful servant. Men of this class plan to enjoy the pleasures of the world first, and later the joys of the kingdom; they hope the Lord will delay his coming for a while. This seems to be a good plan, for thereby one may obtain the sweets of two kingdoms. Then why not accept it and get the best out of the dominions of sin and the realms of righteousness? Why not, with a wink and wise grimace, elude the devil after enjoying his pleasures? Why not, when the shadows lengthen, make a heavy draught upon the mercies of God and be saved even "as a brand plucked from the burning"? Why not "get the best" of the devil; why not trifle with God? Is man capable of such meanness? Would he match his craftiness against the cunning of Satan or pit his shrewdness against the wisdom of Christ? Surely astronomical mathematics cannot compute the height of such folly. Is it not written, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked"? Men of this type are so contemptible that mankind has never deigned to warn them; indeed, it is only because the mercy of Christ is infinite that they are permitted even to hear the injunction, "Watch and pray." *unloved*

The second class elicits the pity of men and angels. It is made up largely of the young, who do not plan deliberately to deceive the devil and play upon God's mercy. They fall into sin and intemperate habits not by well-calculated choice, but because of apparently innocent leadings; they do not see ultimate results. They think themselves able to withstand every allurement; believe they can expose themselves to evil influences and run no risk of contamination; they can indulge in this or that without any danger of ultimate

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ruin; weaklings may fall, but they, never. The innocence of this class has so appealed to the pity of the Master and men that they sound a note of warning. Christ pleads, "Watch and pray"; Paul writes, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"; while Pope declares in memorable lines:

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,  
As to be hated needs but to be seen;  
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,  
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

*Watch.* It is significant that Christ says, "Watch," for he knows we are somewhat responsible in the matter of temptation, having both will and wisdom. To watch is the duty of the eye, and as God gave us physical eyes to discern danger and recognize safety, so he gave us spiritual eyes which instinctively watch for shoal or channel. To the spiritual sailor Christ's word is, "Watch." Experience teaches that the youthful mariner upon the high seas must ever be vigilant. Many a young and hopeful sailor has missed the joy of sailing into the harbor of eternal peace because he did not heed the advice of Him who knows life's sea from port to port. He who located all the hidden reefs which have wrecked the fairest crafts enjoins us to be watchful. The Master Pilot is aware that heaven-bound sailors must pass the same dangers as Ulysses. Singing sirens, with enchanting music, tempt the steersman to sail toward them and death. Every day the Christian mariner will confront a new Scylla and Charybdis; each day will bring its squall or lashing storm to threaten destruction. Despite the fact that sirens, Scyllas, and storms have strewn the shore with wreckage, many are careless. To these Christ throws out a warning, for well he knows,

The steersman's part is vigilance,  
Blow it rough or smooth.

"Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." This was spoken in reference to a nation, but is also appli-

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cable to him who seeks to be God's free man in earth or heaven. We cannot train our spiritual eyes too keenly to see the danger in supposedly unimportant things, which may open the doors of temptation and lead to ruin. In training this inner eye we should learn to observe that which is significant in a reconnoiter and relate it to our safety. A young Western farmer frequented the village barroom and hitched his team by the saloon. After his conversion he never visited the barroom, but continued to hitch his team in the same place. The trained and watchful eye of a good old deacon noticed this, and after congratulating the youth upon his conversion said: "George, I am a good deal older than you, and will be pardoned, I know, if I make a suggestion out of my wider Christian experience. No matter how strong you think you are, take my advice and at once change your hitching post." It is evident that the spiritual eye should be trained, and that Christ made no mistake when he said, "Watch." *Observant*

The second duty of the watchful eye is to be alert for the helpful. He who starts upon a journey is warned of the precipice and swamp, but is not carefully advised of the safe and favorable stretches. In relating Christ's command, "Watch," to temptation, we naturally think first of watching for hindrances, but we should also be ever alert for that which is helpful and encouraging. We should watch for the precipice, but not forget to look for the meadow path; we should be cautious of the swamp, but not forget to look for the refreshing spring, God's blessing to the pilgrim. We guard against the contamination of the Bowery, but why not seek a healthful suburban home? Why fight against dangers that lurk about a saloon, when there is a good hitching post by the church? We naturally watch against the bad influences of an evil companion, but why not make a friend of the well-balanced man of temperate habits? Why watch

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against the one who plays upon the strings of thy baser nature, and not seek for him who brings from the organ of thy soul celestial harmonies which bless you and glorify God? Why not watch for the helpful?

*Pray.* When Christ said, "Watch," he recognized the power of the human element in temptation; when he said, "Pray," he recognized the divine element; when he said, "Watch and pray," he knew it required both human and divine power to save a man from falling. Experience teaches that if we would not become victims of sin we must watch with diligence and pray without ceasing. Praying is as important as watching. He who has not learned to pray when tempted knows not the Christian's secret of stability.

Prayer offers many advantages. Relating to temptation two are prominent. The first advantage is not a direct answer to prayer, but is found in the fact that during the prayer-moment one has time to mobilize his moral forces for battle. In the heat of temptation the fate of a character hangs on seconds. The prayer-moment offers an opportunity in which all our moral reinforcements may rush to our aid and save the day. The youth who prays before he touches his lips to the wine finds that the prayer-moment has given him a great advantage, for all the spiritual reserves within him rush forth to defend his honor. The value of the time element in the critical moment of temptation cannot be computed.

The second advantage is a direct answer to prayer. In response to our request God sends us spiritual forces, for he is aware we may fall before the allurements of sin. He who walks the highway of righteousness must have divine support. Spiritual leaders insist that too great stress cannot be placed on prayer during severe strain. Nevertheless, many who succeed in business ventures by their own ability consider themselves able to face any proposition; therefore they

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eliminate God and confront temptation alone. No greater mistake is possible. Ruined lives, wrecked homes, and drunkards' graves bear witness that many fathers have faced the allurements of the gilded cage alone and thereby have fallen a prey to that damnable habit which dethrones reason and makes for bestiality. These are they who know the bitter truth of the words, "Wine is a mocker."

We have innumerable witnesses who tell of sad failures because men fought alone; there are also many who testify that God, through prayer, brought them off more than conquerors. Some years since, a man in a New England village was a victim of intemperance. He was converted often, but always fell. One day, after a new start, he faced his old companions in the barroom where he had gone on business. They invited him to join them, but he hesitated, then asked to be excused a moment. Just outside the door he fell upon his knees, sought God's help, got the victory through prayer, and is a standing illustration of God's sustaining power.

Help me to watch and pray,  
And on thyself rely,  
Assured, if I my trust betray,  
I shall forever die.

## LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 20

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### JESUS IN GETHSEMANE

GOLDEN TEXT: "The Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."—Matt. 26. 45.

#### THE BETRAYAL OF THE SON OF MAN

By BURTON M. CLARK, D.D.

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TRAGEDY through a tear and comedy through a peal of laughter represent the failure or the triumph of the beast or the god within man. Epic and drama crystallize the deepest meaning, the intensest longings and struggles of social, ethical, and spiritual life. The Golden Text is epic and drama epitomized. It summarizes the grandeur and the littleness of man upon the earth. Here life is the canvas upon which man the artist paints the failure of sin and the triumph of righteousness.

Two thoughts stand out in great clearness: I. The Son of Man. II. The Betrayals of Sin.

I. *The Son of Man.* How suggestive of a divine beginning and a divine end! How vast the stretch of time! How long the trail from the primitive Adam of all the living to the intellectual, the moral, and the spiritual grandeur of a Moses and a Paul, a Plato and a Shakespeare! If evolution be a hint of God's method in the making of a man, the building of a soul, the working out of the masterpiece of creation, then the travail of divine wisdom and love manifests the perfect flower and fruit of all time and all humanity in the Son of man. The distance traveled by Life, the immortal pilgrim, from a single cell cradled in the gray ooze and slime of a primeval ocean to the coronation of its supreme meaning in the son of Mary and Son of

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God, cannot fail to heighten the grandeur of spiritual manhood and add new glory to the attributes of creative love, power, and wisdom.

Theology, literature, history, poetry, and art are not alone in crowning the mysterious Jew as Lord of all. Ethics, biology, anthropology, sociology, and the kindred sciences of modern thought recognize in the Son of man the realization of the most perfect, the only perfect fruit of the human centuries. A Burbank may tame the wild cactus of the desert and fit it to be the food of domesticated animal and man. He may continue his creations of wonder and beauty beyond the dreams of Oriental magic and to the benefaction of all after ages. But no genius of science in the realm of ethical and spiritual life has yet been able, or, so far as thought can project itself into the future, gives promise of being able to equal, much less improve upon, God's ideal as revealed, concreted, actualized in the personality of Jesus Christ. He is the Goal of all evolution, the Key that unlocks the deepest, the ultimate significance of every art, literature, science, and problem of life on our planet, and, we believe, of all planets. In that term "Son of man" are summed up all the fears and hopes, the sorrows and joys, the pains and delights of all that man has been, is, and longs to be in his divinest moments of dream, vision, ideal, and worship. The Son of man reveals and epitomizes the eternally masculine and the eternally feminine, the eternally divine and the eternally human of manhood and womanhood. In the immensities and eternities of ethical and spiritual possibilities, in our life's unfoldings, we shall ever approximate toward him, yet we shall never get beyond him. Here reason and revelation, science and religion veil their faces and cry, "Nothing more beyond."

II. *The Betrayals of Sin.* There is a measureless pathos in our Lord's query connected with the text: "Do ye sleep still in this trial moment of the ages?

## THE BETRAYAL OF THE SON OF MAN

Will neither danger, nor warning, nor the awful nature of the conflict, nor love nerve you to vigilance? When the meanness and the littleness of human nature through ages of sin are to bear their deadliest fruit; when the hiss and scorch of the traitor's kiss are so near the cheek of infinite love, purity, and sacrifice, can you not watch one hour?"

We are led to ask, "Who were the betrayers and sinners?" It was neither Judas nor Roman soldiers alone. The latter constituted the guard of the temple on festive occasions. They, however, were not the guilty ones. Whatever the defects and failures of the individual Roman soldier, as touching his own life, in this tragedy he was but the grim instrument of wrong. They were the purloined agents of Jewish ecclesiastical politics and cunning. The real sinner was not the Roman but the Jew, not the man of toil and humble life, not the child of the proletaire, but the refined, cultured, pampered high priest of those ancient wrongs, cruelties, lusts, ambitions, falsehoods, that too often in the guise of patriotic and religious motives and respectability have crowned the demon and crucified the god.

It was not the sin alone of the individual but of a type, a class, a moral order as old as the history of sin and man. It was not only the crime of the privileged religious and political monopolist of that time but of all time. Leo X and his crimson cardinals; Louis XIV and his sycophant nobles and parasites; Cortez and his blood-stained cavaliers; slaveholders and scarred human chattels; industrial monopolists with rebates and market corners on coal, iron, sugar, wheat, ice, meat, land; legislative representatives tainted with corporation and lobby gold; labor slugs rejoicing in human cripples, incendiary fires, and dynamite murders —these all are but age-long and varying forms of the taint and poison and fruit of sin growing out of unregenerate human nature.

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We are living in an age when ethics and religion, as never before, are having a practical application to civic, social, and economic problems. Capital and labor are being ethicized, spiritualized. The sky line and the earth line meet for a rational understanding and divine union. Amos and Isaiah could utter their burning messages of indictment against effeminacy, luxury, real estate robbery, and political demagogism; Aristotle could lay down ethical laws as the basis of economics and politics; John the Baptist could teach the necessity of repentance and right living to soldier, taxgatherer, wage earner, and capitalist; Juvenal could pen his bitter, burning invectives and satire against the lust and sins of a hard, sated Roman world; Jesus, Supreme Teacher, could enunciate with clearness and beauty the spiritual laws and principles of the kingdom of God, yet these great messages to humanity have never had as much attention as they need and are receiving to-day. Modernism in the evangelical sense, rational Christianity and social democracy as applied to civics, economics, industry, and commerce, are uniting to hasten the evolution of the new heaven and the new earth. The betrayal of Jesus into the hands of sinners is having an economic interpretation as never before. Greed, avarice, covetousness were the lurid flames that burned in the heart of Judas in his role of traitor, and in the bosoms of the ecclesiastics and politicians who posed as the conservators of law, order, civilization.

The price of the betrayal of Jesus by Judas was thirty pieces of silver—the pitiable sum of \$18.60. An artist has sought to portray the crime of Judas on canvas. After the betrayal he wanders out into the gloom and mystery of the night. The deeper and more awful gloom of the mystery of sin weighs him down. The fires of sin burn fiercely in the subterranean vaults of his being. They send their red currents hissing, burning, damning through vein and artery, brain and heart.

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As he clutches his money bag with fingers of fire and steel, he is the typical Judas of all time, be he savage or barbarian, Jew or Gentile, Greek or Roman, or his offspring in the twentieth century. The Judas in the picture wanders solitary in the night until he comes upon a group of workmen who have made the three crosses for the tragedy of the morrow. They sleep peacefully as the result of honest physical toil. Their calm, restful look deepens the pain and hell of the traitor's heart, but brings neither tear nor repentance. With a tighter clutch upon the bag stained with the blood of innocence, he hastens on to face the terrible specters of remorse and despair. Nemesis and Furies are closing grimly and piteously around him. Hell fires reach the limit of a soul's endurance. Frantic with the energy of a madman, he rushes back to the palace of gilt where he sold his soul for the price of blood. Throwing the accursed silver upon the marble floor, he shrieks that awful cry born of the insanity and remorse of sin, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." Then again out into the blackness of darkness that envelops his doomed soul, unshrived, as a suicide he passes into the presence of his Maker. The eternal aftermath of sin is his destiny. Yet, better than some of the Judases of humanity, he confessed his sin and tried to get out of the business.

Because of the tragic setting of history a Balaam, an Alcibiades, a Judas, a Robespierre, an Arnold will be pilloried in the rogues' gallery of all time as the betrayers of the righteous. However, they are but types of men in religion, professional life, legislative bodies, magisterial office, industry, commerce, finance, skilled or unskilled labor, who have sold truth and bartered in God and men because of the worm of avarice. The woman who, because of social vanities, frivolities, and sinful pleasures, shuns the holy office of poetess, prophetess, priestess, educator associated with home and conscious motherhood; the man who

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plays false to fatherhood and domestic responsibilities; the educator, author, journalist, lawyer, physician, preacher, artist, inventor, discoverer, who prostitutes his genius or talent to unholy greed; the artisan or mechanic who does dishonest work, wastes material, kills time, or incapacitates nonunion men for service; the financier who seeks to get an unjust corner on any of life's commodities; the public servant who through municipal, state, or federal franchise, or through international diplomacy, seeks to mortgage the rights of the present and future generations to himself and offspring, or selfishly to profit by political graft, ferment, or blackmail, is tainted with the same crime, and in the realm of moral and spiritual life is subject to the same law of dwarfings and penalties as a classical Judas. However much he may differ in minor details, in the spirit of covetousness he is essentially one with his ancient namesake. His life belongs to the great chain of facts and evidence that prove that the beast, the fool, the devil is latent in every human bosom, unless expelled by divine grace coöoperating with the human will.

If humanity has had a Judas it has also had a John; if the world has been blackened by a Nero it has been whitened by a Christ. Human nature grows better with the passing of the suns; the leaven of the Son of man spreads; the sore spots of sin, vice, disease, and crime lessen; the ethical, social, civic, and industrial health-blush deepens; a Luther, a Wesley, a Wilberforce, a Shaftesbury, a Lincoln, a Booker T. Washington, and an innumerable army who have not bowed the knee to Baal point citizen and statesman, wage-earner and capitalist to higher heights. The trail of God's light across the darkness of the ages widens and brightens. Shall we be numbered with the traitors who betray Christ and humanity? or shall we rank with the servants of the Son of man?

## LESSON FOR NOVEMBER 27

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### THE TRIAL OF JESUS

GOLDEN TEXT: "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again."—1 Pet. 2. 23.

BY ELBERT C. HOAG

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CERTAIN facts of exemplary significance stand out in the conduct of Jesus under trial. Peter is referring to these facts. They have left a vivid and enduring impression upon him. In the text he recalls the attitude of Jesus before the Jewish council, citing it as a notable instance of patient endurance and as an example to those he is addressing—slaves in household service.

Not a few of the followers of Jesus in that early day were in bondage, under which there was more or less of unrest and reaction. The new outlook of life and the larger hope which had dawned before these Christian slaves made the bondage they were under especially and increasingly irksome. To be exposed to the bad temper and unwarranted mistreatments of unscrupulous masters led them, it would seem, to appeal to the apostle for advice. To submit to the abuses that were being heaped upon them, without cause, they cannot accept as a Christian requirement. What should be done? In the face of this trying ordeal Peter counsels resignation and patience, and then in view of reconciling them to the situation under which they are protesting he refers to the trial of Jesus. He had confronted like oppressive and humiliating conditions—had done so bravely and uncomplainingly. The apostle holds up his conduct as an example to these protesting slaves.

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A noteworthy fact in connection with his trial is:

1. *Its Attending Provocations.* That he, the divine Son of God, should have been the target of such incomparable indignities seems almost incredible. What more aggravating ordeal than that through which he passed on the night of Gethsemane? His betrayal under the deceptive salutation of a kiss, his humiliating arrest, his desertion in face of the professed loyalty of his disciples, and Peter, most emphatic of all in his pronouncement of loyalty, "following afar off unto the high priest's palace," sitting idly and curiously by just "to see the end"—and then the farce of an examination to which he is subjected—and then the insults and buffeting of the mob, all of which he deliberately endured.

As an example of most notable behavior Peter now holds him up to the consideration of those whom he is addressing. They are to follow in his footsteps. From him they are to learn the secret of meeting hard conditions.

Another noteworthy fact in connection with the trial of Jesus is:

2. *Its Injustice.* Peter evidently had this in mind in recalling and citing the conduct of Jesus to those whom he is addressing. Whatever their lot they were clearly not in a soror strait than he had been.

The whole movement of the arrest and conviction of Jesus was a gross miscarriage of justice. This, as a foregone conclusion, is perhaps one of the hardest conditions that an accused man has to face. In the case of Jesus it meant certain conviction—conviction on the ground of prejudgment. Before his arrest his persecutors had decided that he should die. By a pre-determined plan there was no hope of acquittal for Christ. The whole judicial procedure in the presence of Caiaphas was but a mere travesty of justice. Christ so felt it to be. He read his fate at once from the attitude of the council before which he was arraigned.

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It was clearly and unmistakably written in their envy, in the malicious hatred that they cherished, in the heartless intrigue to which they were more than ready to resort, and in the pressure of mad haste which they displayed in order to compass their purpose.

There was a law in the Jewish code "which enacted that all cases involving the death penalty should be tried in the daytime"—a law the mercifulness and wisdom of which are clearly apparent. A trial that contemplates the taking of a life should be conducted under the most favorable conditions; at a time when those having the matter in hand are in the best possession of their faculties; at a time, too, when violent passions may have, in a measure, subsided, and when, all things taken into consideration, the accused would have the fairest chance of vindicating himself. But these judicial murderers who have instigated the arrest of Jesus during the night cannot wait for the day. In their mad haste to convict him they ignore the statutory requirement, convene the council, begin and end the real trial before dawn. To be sure, formal sentence was deferred until morning. In this they adhered to the letter of the law. In spirit, however, they had transgressed it, and Christ could not but feel that the convening of this morning council in order to pass sentence according to the letter of the law was a farce, an unscrupulous burlesque upon justice. He had been convicted and condemned at the night session of the court. In this he was deprived of the privilege accorded him by law for trial. It was in reality the mob spirit that accomplished his sentence.

Again, the perversion of justice at his trial may be seen in that having been arrested without a charge there is no ground on which the court can proceed against him. Such being the case, one has to be trumped up, to which end Matthew gives us this most disgraceful and iniquitous scene—the "chief priests and elders and all the council seeking false witnesses

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against Jesus in view" of putting him to death; they, in the presence of whom he had a right to expect that his cause would be fairly adjudicated, plotting his death through the testimony of false witnesses, for which, in the strait that confronts them, they do not scruple to bid. What an exhibition of heartless purpose! Could there be a more iniquitous perversion of justice?

But the consummation of perverted justice appears in the sentence that the high priest intrigues against him. All efforts "to found a charge on the testimony of witnesses fail." In this strait Caiaphas, it would seem, acts upon the thought that possibly he may be led to incriminate himself. To this end he puts the prisoner under oath: "I adjure thee, tell us whether thou art the Christ, the Son of God?" Upon affirming that he was it is at once construed by the high priest, with a symbolic show of horror, as blasphemy, and on the strength of this construction the Sanhedrin declare him "guilty of death." This is indeed a strange process in law, where the prisoner is put under oath as to the crime of which he is accused and is condemned on his own testimony.

Of course, on the ground of their Christology it was a foregone conclusion that the Sanhedrin could not accept Jesus as the Messiah. But had they inquired into his teaching and acts it would have been clearly apparent that he was not guilty of the crime for which they have condemned him. And yet so madly intent are they upon his death that they issue a snap judgment of blasphemy upon the prisoner's own words—words uttered there in court in response to an intrigue of Caiaphas and not in view of any charge that they could bring and sustain against him from without—words, too, uttered as indicating clearly the honest and unassuming conviction of his soul. They sentence him to death for ~~an~~ expression of opinion which, because of their lack of evidence to convict him, they construe

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into blasphemy. They must have some loophole of justification for the malicious intentions they are bent upon executing.

Lastly, the trial of Jesus is noteworthy in view of  
3. *His Self-Control.* This was masterful. To be reviled and not strike back in the same terms is a most impressive showing of conduct. How unlike human nature! Such self-control seems almost divine. And yet had it been accomplished through divine power Peter could hardly have referred to Jesus as an example. If, as divine, he had controlled himself under the provocations and injustice of his trial, his conduct would have had no exemplary significance whatever for these Christian slaves who were facing similar conditions in their own strength—a strength that was purely and only human.

One of the most convincing evidences that Jesus faced the ordeal of his trial as human, as they to whom Peter was writing were facing theirs, is the protest with which he anticipated it, in Gethsemane. Jesus in no wise assumed the masterful poise that he reveals, in the face of intrigue and insult, easily and naturally. This is plain enough as we look upon him in the garden confronting the ordeal that awaits him. Note the tragic struggle that he is having with himself, the pressure of anguish that racks his soul—so intense that his very lifeblood is distilled into beads of falling sweat—the reactions against which he has to contend; at one time in control of himself, then again for the time being almost yielding the ground he has made: “If it be possible, let this cup pass from me”—this cup too bitter for me to drink! But finally he triumphs, bringing himself into absolute subjection to the will of God.

As we look into this conflict of Gethsemane we cannot for a moment think that Jesus has not paid the price of that masterful self-command which he exhibits in the presence of his persecutors, the same price that

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any man must and does pay who gains perfect control of himself—the price that Peter would have those whom he is addressing pay. The struggle and victory of Jesus for self-mastery, to be sure, was made in anticipation of the real stress of trial. This fact, however, does not lessen the significance of the conflict, but must be taken into account in the same sense as if it had been made in the actual presence of his enemies.

Our real soul victories are oftentimes won before the stress and din of tangible conflict. This certainly was so in the case of the Master. Through a struggle with himself in Gethsemane he reached the definite conclusion that he would calmly accept whatever might come to him in the accomplishment of his redemptive mission. This conclusion gave him the equipoise that he manifests in the presence of his persecutors.

And how remarkable his self-control! With the consciousness that he might have commanded twelve legions of angels in his defense, yet withal he waives this possibility, deliberately submitting to the heartless indignities and insults of the mob. He allowed himself to be “oppressed and afflicted, to be brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened he not his mouth.” He holds the reins of his spirit so tightly, so masterfully, that he can face the onslaughts of iniquity in silence. And this passive endurance of insult shows no lack of spirit, as some might say. Whoever looks upon Jesus in the conflict of Gethsemane can never for a moment think that he was passive in the presence of his enemies because of any inherent tameness of spirit. On the contrary, that conflict shows a tremendous vigor of spirit, a vigor that is revealed in the struggle and mastery of self rather than in a resentful attack upon and battle with his enemies. “Greater is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city.”

## LESSON FOR DECEMBER 4

### PETER'S DENIAL

GOLDEN TEXT: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—1 Cor. 10. 12.

By SAMUEL GARDINER AYRES, B.D.

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SAINT PAUL has a wonderful way of piling up admonitions one upon another until he makes a mountain of them. This verse is the summit of a series of admonitions. It is the climax and the conclusion of the series. Let a weaker man attempt to do this and he will fail. It is only the talented man who can admonish and really do good. Some who attempt it anger their hearers, others descend from their admonishing to mere petulant scolding and thus make a spectacle of themselves, therefore harming the cause they strive to benefit. Not so Paul. He was never a scold. He always brings his readers back to God and to the foot of the cross before he finishes his discourse. In this respect he is ever an example for Christian workers to follow.

In this great text there are three main divisions or implications:

I. *Seeming certainty is not always true certainty.* A little thought will convince one that this is an axiom of everyday life. The mirage of the desert in nature; the man who bows to another man as he supposes and finds himself bowing to his own reflection in a great mirror; the fancied or supposed resemblance of one person to another leading to a mistake, are all only suggestions of many more circumstances which prove and illustrate this fact.

There is, however, another kind of facts illustrating



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this thought, taken not from the natural but from the spiritual world. They represent some symptoms of a condition in the spiritual life. Here is an illustration of what we mean. A man commits sin. He stifles and murders his conscience, and then says, "I am as good as the rest of the church members. I am standing all right." If he allows himself to think, he knows he is not, and so does the world. In a certain revival a gentleman who was a church member arose when the invitation was given for those to rise who were church members and desired to become active Christians. After the meetings were over he was asked if he would like to indicate a renewal of his vows with others before the congregation. He said no, and then inquired what he had done that required a step of this kind. His life was a flagrant denial of the keeping power of his religion. Alas! he thought he was standing, but he had fallen.

Our Lord realized this side of religious experience and declared that there would be some in that day who would say, "Lord, Lord," and he would declare, "I never knew you." In their anxiety they would even try to argue the case, but he would say, "Depart from me, I never knew you." And so their certainty of entering heaven was over and they departed into outer darkness. Are not most men certain of heaven? Many seem to be. Some expect to go to heaven because of the goodness of others. They should make this matter sure for themselves.

II. *The second implication of the text is the necessity of taking heed.* It is necessary to be attentive at all times. Attention is at the basis of the success of many a great man. The presence of it makes a good naturalist or a fine machinist, a thorough scholar or an accurate statistician.

Taking heed, however, means more than attention, it means responsibility. There is great need for attention; there is greater necessity for the cultivation of

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the sense of responsibility. A tramp is irresponsible. The young employee who is irresponsible makes no advancement, the student who is irresponsible does not become a scholar.

Just what is responsibility? What does it mean? It is a moral obligation which acknowledges as a trust any duty or work and strives to meet that obligation in the highest sense by doing all of that duty or performing the work in the best manner and with the highest motives. Those who occupy positions of trust in business manifest this feeling by an attention to their work so great that it suggests to the on-looker that they have made it their first interest. In fact, it appears that their care is as great as it would be if they owned the business. Such men make fine partners and faithful employees. Business men say that it is hard to find the man who cares enough for his work to take infinite pains. The man who will rush to a window to see a street parade instead of attending to his work is not wanted.

In our thought we may take a step in advance and say that taking heed is conscientiousness. That is, it is taking our religion into our work and doing it so that there is no possibility of trouble at night with a tormenting conscience. If all our statesmen had this element in their characters we would have laws better made and better enforced. If all our physicians had this characteristic fully developed more people would get well. If all our editors carried this idea with them to the office we would have no yellow journalism. If ministers were always fully conscientious fewer men would be lost and more saved. If this were carried into everyday life by every man, woman, and child the world would be a better place in which to live.

There is yet another element in taking heed, namely, perseverance. It is not sufficient to give attention for a time. Some time ago a student found himself at the foot of a class of forty. He took heed and at the end

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of the first year stood eleventh in rank in the class; at the end of the second year he graduated fourth in his class. Some held out for a while, but his work improved from month to month. He kept on taking heed. It is not necessary to enforce the necessity of taking heed now that we understand the elements comprising the injunction. It is enough to remind one that the highest ideals and success go with taking heed, and failure and ruin with heedlessness.

III. *The third implication is the possibility of falling.* There is almost a military sense to the expression. We see a man on guard pacing back and forth upon his beat. He is alert, guarding his post. Tramp, tramp, tramp, every step measured. No enemy can assault him without danger. Let him fail and sleep at his post and the enemy will creep up and overpower him. He is down and at the mercy of the foe because he was not on guard. What is meant here is the falling from righteousness into sin. Many people have read the great religious allegory of John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but few have read his other great allegory, *The Siege of Mansoul*. It is worth reading. The emphasis in this book is laid upon the fact that the city of man's soul never yields to Diabolus unless there is a traitor within the city. So a man never falls unless he has been preparing to fall. Off his guard he commits one breach of discipline and he thinks it unobserved. The next day more derelictions are his, and it all ends by his being placed in the guard-house, or by his not withstanding the assaults of the enemy when they appear.

The loss of faith is in the spiritual world an off-guard condition. God pity the man who is discouraged and who has lost faith in himself! God pity the man more who has lost faith in himself and in God too!

In these days there is much discussion of the subject, "Does belief influence action?" With this goes the attempt to sever morality from religion. With

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this also goes the attempt to banish the supernatural and the spiritual. This is a blow aimed at the heart and must be warded off. Many academic questions are foisted upon the religious world as if they were essential. They are disputable questions and always will be. Your position on any one of them marks you out as a radical or a conservative scholar—nothing more. It makes little difference what you think about them. They may be vital to boys and a few teachers—very vital. What silly things have seemed vital to the world at times! But when it comes to the great essentials, faith must be on guard. In this day the phrase “not up to date” is used as a bugaboo with which to frighten a man away from essential belief. Thank God there are some things which never pass away! Love is eternal. The mercy of God endureth. If faith in the real essentials of the Christian religion is gone, then beware, one is in danger of falling. We know of men who began by letting a little slip here, and then a little there, until finally all was gone and they have fallen to a very low estate. Sometimes the process has been going on for years.

The fallen preacher is the worst spectacle of all. This condition was a constant horror for Paul, who feared lest after having preached to others he might become “a castaway.” Of all men he is most miserable. Did you ever see one? We have. He had dabbled in politics, learned to drink, had fallen and finally lost his manhood. Another preacher who was unusually brilliant is now somewhere a wanderer on the face of the earth, “a castaway” indeed. He occupied some of the best pulpits of his church, but drink conquered him. There is especially a need for the man who has had the drink habit to take this text to heart. A poor man had for eight years lived a white, clean life and he was rejoicing, almost boasting in his freedom from his old appetite. Some friend put liquor in a glass of lemonade which he drank, and he fell and was so disheartened

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that he has not yet recovered from his discouragement. Many a similar story might be told. But this is an admonition which every Christian needs and should frequently hear.

It is worth while to remember the words of the old saint who saw a wreck of humanity passing by: "There goes John Newton but for the grace of God."

A practical question presents itself to us. How shall we keep from falling? We answer, By taking heed in the following ways:

1. Acquire the prayer habit and the prayer spirit. When alone, pray. It is not a matter of posture, it is a matter of the heart. When in the crowd, pray. Learn to wing a simple prayer to God. The words, "O God, help me for Christ's sake," have saved many a man from falling.

2. Fill the mind with good thoughts, either by reading or conversation or by meditation. This is a great safeguard.

3. Go not in the way of temptation. Shun the evil which entices you. Provoke not temptation.

4. Never cease to trust God to help you conquer.

There is one thought not in the text, but which constantly recurs in the New Testament. Is there hope for the man who has fallen? We answer, yes, there is. There is not only hope, but help. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The mercy of God never slumbers nor sleeps. Thank God, there is hope. If there had not been, then most of us would have perished in our sins long ago.

## LESSON FOR DECEMBER 11

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### THE CRUCIFIXION

GOLDEN TEXT: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."—Isa. 53. 5.

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KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

THE voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus identified him with the suffering servant of Isaiah. When the eunuch read the chapter the question with him was, Did the prophet speak these things of himself or of another man? "Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." We may assume, therefore, at the outset, that the text has reference to Christ.

It will be seen that there are two words to express his suffering. He was "wounded" and he was "bruised." These words are not accidental, but intentional and significant. If in some way without involving human guilt or the intention of men Jesus could have been crowned with thorns, pierced with nails, and hung to the cross he would have been bruised, but there would have been no wound. If one who has been your friend strikes you purposely you are both wounded and bruised; but if in trying to defend you against an assassin he accidentally hurts you it is another matter: you are bruised but not wounded. Those strange words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death," and "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" were from his wound and not from his bruises. The drops of blood that fell in Gethsemane were not from the bruises but from his wounds. At this time he had been wounded but he had not been bruised. The word behind the English "wound" of the text is one that can

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be used only of soul and of heart and of spirit. It can be applied only to the inward life. It expresses Christ's heart-sickness at sin. It is all the soul can feel of sorrow and shame. It matters not what one may suffer, he cannot endure anything of soul that is not implied in the word "wound." The other word, "bruised," applies to suffering that is physical. Jesus on the cross suffered as any man would suffer. These two words express all that it is possible for anyone to feel. If you are violently put to death it cannot be more than "wounded" and "bruised." There is no agony that is not in those two words.

There is much of unnecessary suffering in the world. It would be difficult, however, to believe that the Son of man suffered needlessly. He taught the apostles that he must suffer. Wherein did this necessity lay? It might have been of inward constraint. It might have been of outward compulsion. We must not suppose, however, that Jesus panted for pain, or that any earthly power could have sent him to the cross if he had not chosen to go. The necessity seems to have been objective. It lay in the task he came to perform. If he redeemed the world he was obliged to suffer. He chose to suffer and save. If we think of redemption as an achievement it need not surprise us that it required suffering. What can be accomplished without pain? It is more perplexing, however, when we ask, "Could not God forgive without the suffering of Jesus?" There is only one answer: He could not. The reason why he could not is difficult to see, but it is not beyond the understanding. No earthly parallel is adequate. We can only see it "through a glass darkly." If a governor pardons a prisoner two interests must be maintained: the government must continue to be antagonistic to crime, and the welfare of the governed must not be overlooked. If God forgives, his own integrity and the interest of his children must be secured. Is this done in the death of Jesus? Does the death

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of Jesus make us fear and reverence God more or less than we would otherwise? It must be said that it increases our fear of him. On the other hand, does the suffering of Jesus make it easier or more difficult for us to sin? It makes it much more difficult. By the death of Jesus God forgives and remains holy, and the people receive an impulse away from sin. Had God forgiven without expressing his antagonism to sin these two results could not have been accomplished. All that God feels for sin and all that he can do against sin has not been done until he dies. If he gives to sin the severest blow of which he is capable he must die. If he suffers all that sin can do to us he must die. Our total of liabilities to sin is death. Jesus has not paid it all until he dies. We must avoid Anselm's mistake. The atonement is not God's ransom to the devil. It is not too much, however, to say that Jesus suffered all that sin can inflict on a life. The principle of the atonement is not wanting even in nature. "Life evermore is fed on death." Every moment one lives something must die. Death is a debt that all must pay sooner or later to universal life. In nature the lower is sacrificed for the higher—the mineral for the vegetable, the vegetable for the animal, the animal for man. In history the order is reversed and the higher suffers for the lower—the parent for the child, the teacher for the student, the man for his country. Liberty and all our great institutions are purchased with blood. If we have not bled for all these things we ought not to forget that somebody has. We eat the very bodies and drink the very blood of those who have died for us. We get much that we do not earn, but somebody earned it. The boy does not earn his clothes, but his father does. It is indispensable that somebody should earn them. The first fortune was earned. If we have not earned what is in our pockets somebody has. We do not merit salvation, but we must beware of supposing that nobody earned it. Jesus

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merited salvation. He suffered for it, and our hope lies in that fact. Grace is just that which his blood has purchased for us. It may be difficult to see why Jesus had to suffer, but it is easier to believe that he saved the world by suffering than for us to believe that it could be saved without the shedding of blood. But it may be said, "We forgive those who have wronged us without any atonement, and why cannot God do the same?" You forgive those who seek your forgiveness. God forgives even many who do not know enough to seek his forgiveness. The child and the imbecile though they sin against him daily are forgiven. You would not forgive if you knew that your man would sin against you again to-morrow. God knows when he forgives that we will sin again even to-morrow, and yet he withholds it not. God must do something that will make men want forgiveness as well as render him able to forgive. God does not require an atonement, he provides one that he may be justified in forgiving. When you forgive in a greater or less degree you condone the evil, but God strikes sin in the face at the same time he is forgiving it. We do not require any atonement because we do not forgive. Who can forgive sin but God? It is not too much to believe that forgiveness that opens heaven's gate, that puts a crown of rejoicing on our heads, that makes us happy with God when the stars have died, should require the death of Jesus.

There are two words in the text that indicate the scope of our redemption. Those words tell us what is included in the atonement. He was wounded for our *transgressions*, he was bruised for our *iniquities*. That for which Jesus suffered need trouble us no more. He suffered for "transgression" and "iniquity." Transgression is the act of sin. Iniquity is the state of sin. Relief from both is included in the atonement. We are not only forgiven, but we are brought from the sinful state. The power of sin is broken, we are made free.

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We are forgiven every act of sin and washed from every stain. The sad trail and mark of sin is removed in redemption. It has been held by some that healing and the gift of tongues and numerous other things were included in the atonement. The text would seem to refute it. Jesus did not die to give us another tongue, but another heart. He did not die to make us well, but to make us good. If nothing had been wrong with us excepting that we were sick or could not speak in an unknown tongue it is safe to say that he would not have died to remove such impediments. Nothing can explain his agony but our sins. When he sweat drops of blood it was not because men were not prophets, or because they could not speak in enough languages, or that they were sick of body; his agony can only be traced to sin. What is provided in the atonement may be a matter of experience to all. Forgiveness and release from the clutches of sin are purchased of blood. They are in the atonement. They are for all.

*Some Reflections:* 1. We must revise our estimate of human life in the presence of Christ's suffering. Whatever may be said in favor of the larger learning, the dignity of man has suffered. He was a special creation, now he is an evolution from existing forms. The earth was the great center of the system, but now it has become a very insignificant thing. If the Bible has suffered at the hands of criticism, in that measure the dignity of man has suffered. A certain type of philosophers have reduced man to a machine and made him an irresponsible being. We are told that he is no more capable of sin than a tiger. What reply can we make to all this better than to say Christ "was wounded for our transgressions, and he was bruised for our iniquities"? In what way is the dignity of man attested more than by the death of Jesus? God did not suffer for a machine, nor hang the Ten Commandments in a zoölogical garden. If he suffered for

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■■ we are worth it. His suffering has in the minds of some even constituted an argument for immortality. Would he suffer all only to make us happier for life's little day? In the old home your mother loved you. You came to believe in your worth because of that love. The world loved you less, but you clung to that elevation to which you were lifted by a mother's love. She was right. God is right. We are worth what he suffered and all he suffered. 2. Since Jesus has suffered for us, if we refuse his death and do not trust him it will fare more ill with us than it would had he not suffered. The proof of this may not be at hand, and yet who could doubt that it must be so? We do not know what had been the fate of the sinner had Jesus not died, but it is safe to say that since his death if we refuse him there will be no mitigation. The glory of God is accomplished in the death of Jesus whether we accept or reject him. His glory is in his offering himself to us in death. Our rejecting may even make that glory more conspicuous. If we are lost God's glory is accomplished in making it possible for us to be saved. 3. If we have not given ourselves to him completely and forever the suffering has not appealed to us as it should have done. 4. If the suffering of Jesus saved a world may not there be some far-reaching significance in your pain?

## LESSON FOR DECEMBER 18

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### THE RESURRECTION

GOLDEN TEXT: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—Matt. 28. 20.

### THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF CHRIST

By CHARLES B. DALTON, B.D.

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THE apostle Peter speaks of God's "precious and exceeding great promises." Of these none could be greater or more precious than this promise of our Lord to be with us unto the end. It was spoken some time during the forty days which elapsed before his ascension. By appointment he and his eleven disciples met upon a mountain in Galilee. We do not know what mountain it was, and speculation is idle. But this we know, it was a mount of vision and a solemn, glorious moment.

The Master's vision swept over the whole world and through all time. And all he saw he coveted. The fire of world-conquest was in his brain and in his heart. Before him stood the disciples. For them too this was to be a mount of vision. They had had a strange, hard experience. We may only dimly conjecture what conflicting emotions surged through their breasts from the night when they forsook him and fled until the day when the cloud received him out of their sight. There must have been alternations of hope and of despair. Now their eyes would flame with the light of faith and again they would droop with the despondency of doubt. All this they may have experienced as they ascended the mount. At times they would fairly leap toward its summit in joy of the anticipated meeting. Again they would question and doubt. Was it indeed he who had made this appointment with them? Would they find

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him there at the appointed time? Thus they journeyed until at last they stood face to face with the Master. Doubts did not vanish easily, especially with some, but at last the revelation is clear and their Lord stands before them as of old. This is their vision, the vision of him. He fills all their sky. They see nothing else. In adoring wonder they fall at his feet. For in this vision of their living Lord he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

When Jesus told them that all authority had been given him in heaven and on earth they were ready to receive his word and to open their hearts to his passion for world-conquest. They were ready to make disciples of all the nations. One assurance only did they need before undertaking the stupendous task, the assurance that he would be with them to the end. This also is our need, and we have no other. That need is abundantly supplied, for the promise is ours, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Let us now observe some of the special grounds for faith in this promise:

I. *We believe in the abiding presence of our Lord because of his power over death.* If we are to believe that our Lord is with us we must hold to the historic truth of his resurrection. Matthew Arnold rightly perceives the dependence of faith in a present Saviour upon faith in a resurrected Saviour. In "Obermann Once More" he gives expression to it:

That gracious child, that thorn-crowned man,  
He lived while we believed.

While we believed on earth he went,  
And open stood his grave.  
Men called from chamber, church, and tent,  
And Christ was by to save.

Now he is dead! Far hence he lies,  
In the lorn Syrian town;  
And on his grave, with shining eyes,  
The Syrian stars look down.

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If our Christ is dead, then are we in a sad eclipse of hope. This was very clear to Paul, who wrote: "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain, your faith also is vain. . . . Ye are yet in your sins. Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable. But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep."

The assertion of Professor Denney, in his recent book, *Jesus and the Gospel*, is not too strong: "Christian experience in all its forms implies the resurrection. State the content of this experience as you will, take any aspect or illustration of it you please, and if you deny the resurrection, instead of being the highest and truest form of human life, such experience must be considered a thing illegitimate, abnormal, delusive." For it is precisely by his resurrection that Christ hath brought "life and immortality to light." It becomes natural and easy to believe in the presence of One who was dead and behold he is alive for evermore. It was this blessed fact of his acknowledged power over death which gave such life and power to the faith of the early church. Nor is it less potent to-day.

I know that my Redeemer lives;  
What joy the blest assurance gives!  
He lives, he lives, who once was dead;  
He lives, my everlasting Head!

He lives, to bless me with his love;  
He lives, to plead for me above;  
He lives, my hungry soul to feed;  
He lives, to help in time of need.

He lives, and grants me daily breath;  
He lives, and I shall conquer death;  
He lives, my mansion to prepare;  
He lives, to bring me safely there.

He lives, all glory to his name;  
He lives, my Saviour, still the same;  
What joy the blest assurance gives,  
I know that my Redeemer lives!

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2. *We rest in the abiding presence of our Lord because of our faith in his deity.* If Jesus is to fulfill the promise of the text, then he must be not only the Risen One but also the Omnipresent One. To discuss the reasons for the church's faith in the deity of Christ would take us far afield, but in a study of the resurrection we do well to remind ourselves of that to which reference has already been made, namely, that one great evidence of his deity is the fact that he rose again from the dead. Well does Canon Liddon say: "The resurrection has been felt to be the great fact which, beyond all others, proclaims Christ as the Son of God with power. When Judas went his way the important requisite in his successor was that he was to be a witness to the resurrection. The resurrection was the burden of all the recorded preaching of the earliest church; the gospel which it preached was a gospel of the resurrection—whether in the mouth of Peter, or Stephen, or Paul, it was the same. And at this moment all who think seriously about the matter know that the resurrection is the point at which the Creed, which carries us to the heights of heaven, is most securely imbedded in the soil of earth, most thoroughly capable of asserting a place for its divine and living subject in the history of our race. Disprove the resurrection, and Christianity fades away into the air as a graceful but discredited illusion: but while it lasts it does its work as at the first; more than any other event, it proclaims Christ to be the Son of God with power in millions of Christian souls."

On the mountain where this precious promise was spoken the disciples gave and the Master received divine honors. "They worshiped him." From that glorious day unto this the followers of Christ have worshiped at his feet. With Thomas they have cried, "My lord and my God." What sure ground of confidence is here! No promise of his can fail me. His word is truth.

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My hope, my all, my Saviour thou,  
To thee, lo, now my soul I bow!  
I feel the bliss thy wounds impart,  
I find thee, Saviour, in my heart.

Be thou my strength, be thou my way;  
Protect me through my life's short day:  
In all my acts may wisdom guide,  
And keep me, Saviour, near thy side.

3. *By reason of our experience we are certain of the abiding presence of our Lord.* This is our experience: We have come to a new life in Christ. His name through faith in his name hath made us whole. "Through faith," says Professor Orr, "and symbolically in baptism, the Christian dies with Christ to sin—is thenceforth done with it as something done away and belonging to the past—and rises with him in spiritual power to newness of life. Christ lives in him by his Spirit. He is risen with Christ, and shares a life the spring of which is hid with Christ in God."

Doubtless we must walk by faith, not by sight, but the presence of Christ has been real in the experience of many. "If Jesus Christ is alive, surely I may know that he is alive," exclaims Robert Speer; "if he is alive I may know that he is alive to lead me, and may yield my life up not alone to a dim sort of faith that he is, after all, overruling all the aims of our human living to his own divine ends, but a vital, present, abiding consciousness that he is with me, shaping every moment of my day, and gathering my life on to his goal for it. Surely I may live and make it my joy to live in the unbroken consciousness of his presence."

One of the bright spots in memory is a visit of Bishop Thoburn to my *alma mater*. A thrill comes over me yet as I think of the testimony he gave to his consciousness of Christ's presence. I did not preserve the exact language, but I find the essential statement in his closing address at the Cleveland Missionary Convention of 1902:

"Through these many years that I have been in

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strange lands I never could have attempted certain tasks if it had not been that I believed and knew that Jesus Christ was by my side. There are many things which I doubt, in which I find myself perplexed; but for years there has never been any doubt whatever concerning this fact. Time and again the risen Son of God has spoken to me in terms which could not be misunderstood. And while I may be mistaken in a letter or a book which I read, or in my own thought, there is such a thing as certainty that comes to the inmost soul concerning which there is no room for doubt."

Nor is the good bishop the only one who has verified this promise. In all the common walks of life we may find those who, in sunshine and in shadow, have walked in conscious fellowship with Christ. And through that fellowship they have come into the peace which passes understanding.

But let us remember that back of this promise and conditioning it there is a command. If we would claim the promise, we must obey the command. "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him. We will come to him, and make our abode with him." Our Master, with his heart tender toward the world and longing for its redemption, commanded his followers to make disciples of all nations. That is the work we have to do, each in his own place and his own time, as the Master directs. Not in the quiet of study and the holy calm of meditation alone, but on life's dusty road where travelers have lost the way, may we meet the Master. "Go ye therefore, . . . and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

## LESSON FOR DECEMBER 25

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### CHRISTMAS LESSON

GOLDEN TEXT: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David ■ Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—Luke 2. 11.

BY JOHN L. NUELSEN, D.D., LL.D.

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It is long, long ago since the shepherds near Bethlehem beheld in the clear eastern sky the glory of the Lord, and heard the voice of the heavenly messenger proclaiming, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Centuries have rolled by, but the luster of that night has not passed away. The tones of that message have been caught and repeated by an increasing number of God-sent messengers. They swell in volume and majesty and power until now from all parts of the world the grand chorus resounds, filling the air with its message of joy and hope and faith and love, "Joy to the world, the Lord has come!"

Christmas has become the festival of joy and peace and love and good will. Why not? God so loved the world that he gave to mankind the greatest of all gifts, his only begotten Son.

Ever since the shepherds in the dim light of dawn fell on their knees and worshiped the Babe of Bethlehem childhood has been elevated to its proper place. Christmas is preëminently the festival of the child. At no time of the year are the happy, golden days of childhood happier or more radiant than when we celebrate the birthday of the Saviour, the Lord. In that little human frame lying in the manger was hidden the fullness of divine possibilities for the salvation of the race.

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The Babe of Bethlehem, the very symbol of frailty, of weakness, of poverty, is the embodiment of divine strength and boundless wealth. Were those wondering, awe-stricken shepherds, were the happy parents, able to form even a faint idea of the greatness and vastness of the forces that were bundled up in that little form? Can anybody forecast the influences that will emanate from the lives of the boys and girls that come to our homes, causing so much work and a great deal of worry, but bringing into our lives a wealth of glory and joy, and making us purer and richer and greater?

Love and joy and happiness and the promise of power and great accomplishments—they all rested in the Babe of Bethlehem and find expression in our Christmas joy and Christmas giving. The paradise of childhood, of happy, pure, sweet childhood, with all its unsolved mystery, its vague yearnings, its divinely understood promises, opens up before our longing gaze. Every returning Christmas takes us back over the chasm of years that are gone forever, and places us again in that lost paradise. But only for a short time. Then the candles of the Christmas tree are burned down, the routine of everyday life holds us again in its clutches; we realize perhaps more clearly than before that we are children no longer; we carry life's burdens; we do our share of the world's work. Life has become prosaic and stern; its demands are inexorable, its duties unrelenting; the strain is intense; the pressure crushes out the poetry and cheer of childhood and makes us dull slaves, driven on by sheer necessity.

Is Christmas only the children's festival, bright, happy, full of good cheer, but after all a sort of self-delusion to the mature mind? Has the race passed its childhood, and has this message, "For unto you is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord," lost its real significance for the mature men and women of the twentieth century? Is he really the Saviour of mankind? Only about one third of all the men, women, and children

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upon whom the Christmas sun is shining have ever heard the name of Jesus. And how many of those who celebrate Christmas have really experienced his saving power? From the religious census of the world we learn that the religion of Jesus Christ numbers about five hundred million adherents. How many of them know him as a personal Saviour? How many of the eighty million inhabitants of Christian America acknowledge him as their Lord? How many of the thirty-two million church members in America are really saved from their sins by this Saviour and are the loyal, devoted subjects of Christ the Lord? When I say "saved from their sins" I do not mean that they have felt some mystic emotion, nor that they have some vague expectation of going to heaven when they die. To be saved means saved from self-centered, narrow life; saved from a life which is dominated by selfishness and perhaps low aspirations, ruled by petty, ignoble motives. It means a life placed in harmony with God, set in tune with the divine will; a life in which Jesus is enthroned as Lord and King; a life which is free and strong and great and God-filled. How many are saved?

Yet nearly two thousand years ago the heavenly messenger announced, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Is he the Lord? Has his kingdom come? Is his will the supreme law on earth, in the social world, in the realm of commerce and polities, in our international relations? Is he the Lord in our Christian nations, in our Christian cities, the product of our Christian civilization? Or does sin still hold sway over them? Are the powers of darkness still at work even in the holy Christmas time?

Every recurring Christmas confronts us with the question, has Christianity really accomplished in the two thousand years of its existence what it claimed to

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do? Has Jesus Christ made good, or is his religion, like all other historic faiths, a product of historical development fulfilling its mission for the time being, then waxing old and finally being discarded? Is Christianity to be classified among the forces which in the past helped to elevate the human race, but which now, owing to changed and much more complicated conditions, has become a relic of the past? Has Christmas become a national holiday, a time of merry-making and frolic, of giving and receiving gifts? Nay, has it principally become a season where we have more cares and more work and more worry than at any other time? Do we deceive ourselves? We tell our children of Santa Claus and of Kriss Kringle and lead them into a world of unrealities, the creation of our imagination. After a while they will awake to the realities of life and smile at the charmed world into which they were led by their elders—and still later they will lead their children into the same imaginary world of Santa Claus and Kriss Kringle. Are we trying to deceive ourselves and our children when we celebrate the birth of Him whom we call Christ the Saviour and Lord? Nay, verily, nay. The Saviour has truly come into this world. See what he has done. Behold what he is doing to-day. He saves individuals. He saves whole nations. He saves the race. He saves all creation.

But he takes his own time. A thousand years are like a day before the Ancient of Ages. We fleeting creatures of a day reckon with minutes and think in hours. The Eternal reckons with centuries and thinks in ages. Hope has wings and flies swiftly to the goal. Reality limps woefully behind.

Christmas is not a time of self-deception. The message of Christmas is not dead. It is a growing, tremendously vigorous, God-given promise. The Saviour is in the world saving men. The Lord is here establishing his kingdom. "Now we see not yet all things subjected to him," says the author of the Epistle to the

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Hebrews. But he also adds the inspiring assurance, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever." And Christmas with all its joy and its blessings is a token of the lasting truth of Saint Paul's declaration: "God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Yes, mankind has grown old, but Christmas keeps it ever young. For it brings every year the old but ever new story of God's gift of love—the old but ever powerful message in which the only hope of the race is embodied, "For there is born to you this day ■ Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."







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